THE MIRACLES OF ANTICHRIST

SELMA LAGERLOF

Translated from the Swedish by

SELMA AHLSTROM TROTZ

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THE MIRACLES OF ANTICHRIST

A NOVEL

BY

SELMA LAGERLÖF

Translated from the Swedish by

SELMA AHLSTRÖM TROTZ

"When Antichrist comes he will appear to be wholly like Christ. Then great distress will prevail, and Antichrist will go from land to land and give bread to the poor. And he shall gain many followers."

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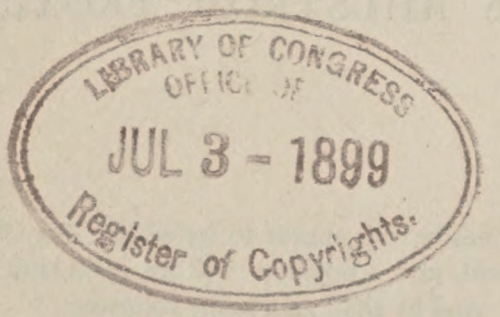

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THE MIRACLES OF ANTICHRIST

INTRODUCTION

"WHEN Antichrist comes, he will appear to be wholly like Christ."

I

THE EMPEROR'S VISION

AT the time when Augustus was emperor in Rome and Herod was king in Jerusalem, it happened that a very great and holy night descended upon the earth. It was the darkest night that anyone had ever seen; one might almost have believed that the whole earth had chanced in under a cellar vault. It was impossible to distinguish water from land or find one's way along the most familiar road. And it could not be otherwise, for not a ray of light came from the sky. All the stars had remained at home in their houses, and the fair moon kept her face turned away. And just as deep as the darkness was also the silence and the stillness.

The rivers had ceased to flow, not a breath of wind stirred, and even the aspen leaves trembled no more. Had one walked by the sea, one would have found that the waves no longer beat against the shore, and had one walked in the desert, the sand would not have grated under foot. Everything was petrified and at rest, in order not to disturb the holy

night. The grass did not grow, the dew fell not and the flowers dared not breathe out fragrance.

During this night the beasts of prey did not hunt, the serpents did not bite, nor did the dogs bark. And, what was still more glorious, no inanimate thing would have disturbed the sanctity of the night by lending itself to an evil deed. No pick-lock would have opened a door, and no knife had been capable of shedding blood.

That same night there came from the imperial dwelling on the Palatine in Rome, a little group of people, who took the way across the Forum up towards Capitolium Hill. During the day which had just expired, the senators had asked the emperor if he had anything against their erecting a temple to him on Rome's holy hill. Augustus, however, had not immediately given his assent. He did not know if it were pleasing to the gods that he should own a temple by the side of theirs, and he had answered that he first wished to ascertain their will in the matter by a nightly sacrifice to his genius. It was he who, accompanied by a few faithful friends, now went to perform the sacrifice.

Augustus suffered himself to be carried in a sedan chair, for he was old, and the long stairs of the Capitolium inconvenienced him. He himself held the cage containing the doves, which he was to sacrifice. No priests, soldiers or senators attended him, only his nearest friends. Torch-bearers went before him as if to make a path through the darkness, and behind him followed slaves, carrying the three-footed altar, the coals, the knives and the sacred fire, and everything else needed for the sacrifice.

On the way the emperor talked cheerfully with his friends, and, therefore, no one noticed the infinite silence and stillness of the night. Not until they had reached the highest part of Capitolium and stood on the empty spot intended for the new temple, was it revealed to them that something unusual was taking place.

This could not be a night like all others, for upon the edge of the cliff they saw the most marvelous being. At first they thought it was an old twisted olive trunk, afterwards they thought that an antique stone-image from the temple of Jupiter had wandered out on the cliff. At last it seemed to them that it could be none other than the old sibyl.

Any thing so old, so weather-beaten and so gigantic, they had never seen. This old woman was frightful. If the emperor had not been there, they would all have fled home to their beds.

"It is she," they whispered to each other, "who numbers as many years as there are grains of sand on her native shore. Why has she come out of her cavern on this particular night? What does she augur the emperor and the empire, she who writes her prophesies on the leaves of the trees and knows that the wind conveys the word of the Oracle to the one who is in need of it?"

They were so terrified that they would have thrown themselves on their knees with their foreheads towards the earth, had the sibyl stirred. But she sat so still she appeared to be lifeless. She sat crouching on the verge of the cliff, and, shading her eyes with her hand, she peered out into the night.

She sat there as if she had gone up on the hill in order to see better something which was taking place far away.

At that moment the emperor and all his attendants noticed how extremely dark it was. No one could see a hand-breadth before him. And how still, how silent! Not even the dull murmur of the Tiber could be heard. The air was stifling. Cold sweat broke out on their foreheads, and their hands were stiff and numb. They believed that something terrible must be imminent.

No one, however, would show that he was afraid, but all said to the emperor that these were good prognostics. All nature held its breath to welcome a new god.

They exhorted Augustus to hasten with the sacrifice, and said that the old sibyl had probably issued from her cavern to greet his genius.

But the truth was, that the old sibyl was so wholly absorbed by a vision, that she did not even know that Augustus had come up on Capitolium. In spirit she was carried away to a distant land, where it seemed to her she was wandering over a great plain. In the darkness her feet continually stumbled against something, which she took to be knolls. She stooped to feel with her hand. No, it was not knolls, but sheep. She wandered between large sleeping flocks of sheep.

Now she noticed the shepherds' fire. It burned in the middle of the field, and she turned her steps towards it. The shepherds were asleep by the fire, and beside them lay their long, pointed staves, used in defending the flocks against wild animals. But

the small creatures with the gleaming eyes and bushy tails, stealing along towards the fire, were they not jackals? And yet the shepherds did not hurl their staves at them, the dogs continued to sleep, the sheep did not flee, and the wild beasts lay down to rest beside human beings. This the sibyl saw, but she knew nothing of what passed behind her on the hill. She did not know that an altar was being raised there, fire kindled and incense scattered, and that the emperor took one of the doves out of the cage to sacrifice it. But his hands were so benumbed that he could not hold the bird. With one stroke of the wing she escaped and vanished above in the darkness.

When this happened, the courtiers cast suspicious glances at the old sibyl. They thought that it was she who caused the mishap.

How could they know that the sibyl was in fancy standing by the shepherds' fire, and that she now listened to a faint sound reverberating through the dead silence of the night. She heard it a long while before she was aware that it did not come from the earth but from the sky. Finally lifting her head, she saw shining forms gliding along in the darkness. It was flocks of angels, who, sweetly singing, flew back and forth over the wide plain, as if seeking something.

While the sibyl listened to the song of the angels, the emperor prepared for a new sacrifice. He washed his hands, purified the altar and received the second dove. But although he exerted himself to the utmost to hold it, the dove glided out of his hands and flew away into the impenetrable night.

The emperor was terrified. He prostrated himself before the empty altar and prayed to his genius. He implored him for strength to avert the misfortunes which this night seemed to portend.

Nothing of this either had the sibyl heard. She listened with her whole soul to the song of the angels which grew stronger and stronger. At last it was so powerful that it awoke the shepherds. They raised themselves on their elbows, and saw shining bands of silvery white angels moving up there in the darkness in long, fluttering lines like birds of passage. Some had lutes and violins in their hands, others citharas and harps, and their song sounded as gleefully as the laughter of children and as careless as the twittering of larks. When the shepherds heard this they arose to go to the city in the mountains where they dwelt, and relate the wonder they had seen.

They groped their way along a narrow, winding path, and the old sibyl followed them. All at once it grew light up on the mountain. A large, clear star appeared straight over it, and the city on its top gleamed like silver in the starlight. All the roaming bands of angels hurried thither with cries of exultation, and the shepherds hastened their steps. When they had reached the city, they found the angels gathered together above a low stall in the vicinity of the city gate. It was a miserable building with a straw roof and the naked cliff for a back wall. Over this stood the star, and hither flocked more and more angels. Some alighted on the straw roof or on the steep wall of rock behind the house, others hovered above it. High up, the air was glorified by radiant wings.

At the same moment as the star began to shine above the city in the mountains, all nature awoke, and the men who stood on Capitolium could not help noticing it. They felt cool, refreshing winds passing through the air, sweet odors streamed up to them from below, the trees rustled, the Tiber began to murmur, the stars glistened, and all at once the moon stood high in the heavens and lighted up the world. And from the sky came the two doves and alighted on the emperor's shoulder.

When this miracle took place, Augustus rose in triumphant joy, but his friends and slaves prostrated themselves. "Ave Cæsar," they cried, "thy genius has answered thee. Thou art the god, who shall be worshiped on Capitolium."

And the homage which the enraptured men rendered the emperor was so loud, that the old sibyl heard it. She rose from her place on the edge of the cliff and came and stood in the midst of the people. And it was as if a dark cloud had risen from the precipice and swept down over the hill. She was appalling in her senility. Coarse hair hung in thin tufts about her head, the joints of her limbs were misshapen and grotesquely large, and the dark skin was like a covering of bark, with furrow upon furrow. But mighty and imposing she advanced towards the emperor. With one hand she seized his wrist, with the other she pointed eastward—

"Behold!" she commanded him, and the emperor lifted his eyes. The expanse opened before him and his gaze penetrated to the distant East. And he saw a poor stall under a steep wall of rock and in the open door a few kneeling shepherds. Inside

the stall he saw a young mother on her knees before a little child, which lay on a sheaf of straw on the floor.

And the sibyl's bony finger pointed towards that lowly child. "Ave, Cæsar," said the sibyl with a scoffing laugh. "There is the God that shall be worshiped on Capitolium Hill." Then Cæsar recoiled from her as from a maniac.

But upon the sibyl descended the mighty spirit of prophecy. Her dim eyes began to glow, her hands stretched toward heaven, her voice changed, so that it no longer seemed to be her own, but had such ring and power that it might have been heard over the whole world. And she pronounced words which she seemed to read up among the stars:

"On Capitolium the world-renewer shall be worshipped,
Christ or Antichrist, but not weak, infirm human beings."

Having said this, she glided away between the terror-stricken men and passed slowly down the hill and disappeared.

But the next day Augustus strictly forbade the people to erect a temple to him on Capitolium Hill. Instead, he built there a sanctuary to the newborn Godchild and called it heaven's altar, Aracoeli.

II

ROME'S HOLY CHILD

ON Capitolium Hill a monastery had been erected which was occupied by Franciscan monks. Yet it could hardly be regarded as a monastery, but rather as a fortress, or as a watch-tower by the seashore where one spies and watches for an approaching enemy.

Beside the monastery stood the splendid basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, built in commemoration of Him the sibyl had here permitted Augustus to see, Christ. But the monastery was built because of the fear of the fulfilment of the sibyl's prediction, that Antichrist would be worshiped on Capitolium.

And the monks felt like soldiers. When they went to church to sing and pray, they fancied themselves walking on ramparts and sending showers of arrows down upon the assaulting Antichrist, of whom they lived in continual fear; all their service being but a struggle to keep him away from Capitolium.

Drawing their cowls forward so as to shade their faces, they sat spying out into the world.

Their eyes became feverish from staring, and they constantly imagined they discovered Antichrist. "He is here, he is here!" they cried. And up they flapped in their brown gowns, raising themselves in combat, like crows, on the top of a crag, at the sight of an eagle.

But some said: "Of what use are prayers and penance? The sibyl has said it. Antichrist must come."

Others said, "God can perform a miracle. If it availed nothing to struggle, He would not have permitted the sibyl to warn us."

Year after year the Franciscans defended Capitolium by penance, and works of charity, and by preaching the word of God.

Century after century they guarded it, but as time advanced, the people became weaker and more powerless. The monks said between themselves: "Soon the kingdoms of the present time can endure no longer. A world-renewer is needed as in the days of Augustus."

They tore their hair and flagellated themselves, for they knew that the reviver must be Antichrist, and that it would be a regeneracy of force and violence.

Just as the sick are pursued by their malady, so these monks were haunted by thoughts of Antichrist. And they saw him plainly before their eyes. He was just as rich as Christ had been poor, as wicked as Christ had been good, as exalted as Christ had been abased.

He carried powerful weapons and led the way at the head of bloody malefactors. He destroyed the churches, murdered the priests, and armed the people for war, so that brother fought against brother, and all feared each other, and peace did not exist. And for every despot and tyrant, that journeyed over the ocean of time, there came from the watch-tower on Capitolium the cry: "Antichrist! Antichrist!"

And for every one of these that disappeared and broke down in the struggle, the monks cried "Hosanna!" and sang the Te Deum. And they said: "It is on account of our prayers that the wicked fall before they have time to ascend Capitolium."

It was a severe judgment upon the beautiful monastery, that its monks never found peace. Their nights were even more grievous than their days. Then they saw wild beasts force their way into the cells, and lie down beside them on their pallets. And every wild beast was Antichrist. To some of the monks he appeared like a dragon, to some like a griffin, and to others like a sphinx. When they arose from their dreams, they were weak as after a severe illness.

The only comfort these poor monks possessed, was the miracle-working image of Christ, preserved in the basilica of Aracoeli. When a monk was in despair from fright, he went into the church to seek comfort. He walked through the whole basilica and entered a chapel on one side of the chief altar. There he lighted consecrated candles and repeated a prayer, before opening the shrine which had a double-locked iron-door and as long as he gazed at the image he remained on his knees.

The image represented a little child in swaddling clothes, with a gold crown on its head, gold shoes on its feet, and the whole of the swaddling clothes glittered with gems, gifts from needy ones who had appealed to it for aid. And the walls in the chapel were covered with pictures illustrating how it had rescued in dangers of fire and sea, how it had healed the sick and helped the unfortunate. On beholding this,

the monk rejoiced and said to himself: "Praise be to God! Christ is still worshiped on Capitolium."

The monk saw the face of the image smile upon him, a smile full of a mysterious conscious power, and his spirit soared to the realms of faith and trust. "What can overthrow thee, thou mighty one?" he said. "What can overthrow thee? Before thee the eternal city bends its knees. Thou art Rome's Holy Child. Thou art the crowned one whom the people adore. Thou art omnipotent, and cometh with help and strength and comfort. Thou alone shall be worshiped on Capitolium."

The monk saw the crown on the image change into a halo, which sent out rays over the whole world. And in whichever direction the rays pointed, he saw churches, where Christ was worshiped. It was as if a powerful ruler had shown him all the citadels and fortresses that defended his realm. Verily thou canst not fall. Thy kingdom must endure."

And each one of the monks, who saw the image, had a few hours of peace until he was again seized with fear. But had the monks not possessed the image, they would not have had a moment's rest.

Thus had the monks of Aracoeli in prayer and struggle worked their way through the ages, and there had never been a lack of watchers, for as soon as one had become worn out by anxiety, others had hastened to occupy his place.

And although the majority of those who entered this monastery were seized with insanity or died an early death, the monks' ranks never seemed to thin, for to fight at Aracoeli was considered a great honor before God.

And so it happened that not more than sixty years ago, this struggle was still in full operation, and because of the impotency of that period, the monks fought with greater zeal than ever before.

At that time there came to Rome a wealthy English lady. She went up to Aracoeli and saw the image, and it charmed her so, that it seemed to her she could not live if she could not have it. Again and again she went to Aracoeli to see the image, and at last she begged the monk to let her buy it.

But even if she had paved the whole mosaic floor of the great basilica with gold pieces, the monks would not have wished to sell her this image, their only solace.

Nevertheless the English lady was so completely fascinated with the image, that she found neither peace nor joy without it. And when she could not gain her object in any other way, she decided to steal it. She did not think of the sin she would have committed, but felt only a great restraint and a burning thirst and would rather risk her soul than deny her heart the joy of possessing what she coveted. And to accomplish her purpose, she first had an image made exactly like the one at Aracoeli.

The image at Aracoeli is carved of olive-wood from the garden of Gethsemane, but the English lady presumed to have an image carved out of elm-wood, exactly like it. The image at Aracoeli is not painted by human hand. When the monk who carved it had taken out brush and paints, he fell asleep over his work and when he awoke, the image had color. It had painted itself in token that God loved Him it represented. But the English lady was bold enough

to let an earthly painter paint her image of elm exactly like the holy image.

For the false image she procured crown and shoes, but not of gold; it was only sheet-iron and gilding. She ordered gems, she bought rings and necklaces and bracelets and diamond knots, but they were all made of brass and glass—and she clothed it as those in quest of succor, had clothed the right and real one.

When the image was completed, she took a needle and engraved in the crown: "My kingdom is only of this world." It was as if she feared that she herself would not be able to distinguish image from image. And it was as if she wanted to keep her conscience clear. I have not presumed to make a false image of Christ, have I? For behold on his crown I have written: 'My kingdom is only of this world.'"

After that she threw a wide cloak over her, and hiding the image under it, went up to Aracoeli; and she begged that she might be permitted to make her devotion before the image of Christ.

As she now stood within the sanctuary, and the candles were lighted, and the iron door opened, and the image appeared before her, she commenced to shake and tremble and appeared as though she were going to faint. The monk who was with her hurried in to the sacristan after water, and she was left alone in the chapel. When he returned she had committed the sacrilege. She had taken the holy miracle-working image and substituted the false, powerless one.

The monk did not notice the change. He shut up the false image behind the double-locked, iron

door, while the English lady returned home with Aracoeli's treasure. She placed it in her palace on a marble pedestal, and was happier than she had ever been before.

At Aracoeli, where every one was wholly ignorant of the loss suffered, the false image of Christ was worshiped as had been the real one, and when Christmas came, there was built, as was customary, a most beautiful grotto inside the church. There the image lay, glittering like a jewel, in Mary's lap, and round it shepherds were arranged and angels and wise men. And as long as the grotto remained, children came from Rome and Campagna and were lifted up into a little pulpit in the basilica, and they preached about the little Christ-child's sweetness and kindness and greatness and power.

But the English lady lived in constant fear lest someone should discover that she had stolen Aracoeli's image of Christ. Therefore she confessed to no one that the image she had was the real one. "It's an imitation," she said, "as like the real one as it can be, but it is only an imitation."

Now it happened that she had a little Italian maid. One day, as the latter was passing through the rooms, she stopped in front of the image and talked to it. "Thou poor little Christ-child, who art no Christ-child," she said. "If thou only knew how the real one lies in splendor in the grotto in Aracoeli and how Maria and San Guiseppe and the Shepherds lie on their knees before it! And if thou knew how the children stand in a little pulpit straight before it, and how they curtesy and kiss their fingers to it and preach to it the best they know how!"

Several days after that the little maid came again and talked to the image : " Thou poor little Christ-child, who art no Christ-child," she said, " dost know, that to-day I have been up in Aracoeli and seen how the real child was carried in a procession? They held a canopy over it, and all the people fell on their knees, and sang and played for it. Thou wilt never take part in anything so grand ! "

And mark well, a few days later the little maid came again and talked to the image : " Dost thou know, little Christ-child, who art not a real Christ-child, that it is better for thee to be where thou art. Because the real child is called to the sick, and it rides to them in a golden carriage, but it cannot help them, and they die in despair. And it is commenced to be said that Aracoeli's holy child has lost its power of doing good, and that tears and prayers have no effect upon it. It is far better for thee to remain where thou art than to be appealed to and not be able to help."

But the next night a miracle happened. Towards midnight there was a violent ringing at the monastery portal in Aracoeli. And when the porter did not open quickly enough, it began to knock. The raps had a sharp metallic ring and echoed through the whole monastery. All the monks rushed at once out of their beds. All who had been tormented by frightful dreams rushed out, thinking that Antichrist was come.

But when the door was opened—when the door was opened ! Who should be standing there on the threshold but the little Christ-child? It was his little hand that had pulled the bell-rope. It was his

little gold-shod foot that had reached out and kicked on the door!

The porter straightway took the holy child in his arms. Then he saw that it had tears in its eyes. Alas! the poor holy child had wandered through the city in the night! What must it not have seen? So much poverty and want, so much vice and so many crimes! It was dreadful to think of all that it must have gone through.

The porter went immediately to the prior and showed him the image. And they wondered how it had got out in the night.

But the prior gave orders to strike the church bell and call the monks to service. And all the monks of Aracoeli marched into the great dimly-lighted basilica to replace the image in all solemnity.

Worn and suffering they walked along, shivering in their heavy gowns of wadmal. Several of them wept, as though they had escaped a deadly peril. "What would have become of us," they said, "if our only comfort had been taken from us? Is it not Antichrist who has enticed Rome's holy child out of the sheltering sanctuary?"

But when they were about to put back the Christ-child into the shrine of the chapel, they found there the other child, the one that bore on its crown the inscription, "*My kingdom is only of this world.*" And upon examining the image more closely, they found the inscription.

Then the prior turned to the monks and spoke to them:

"Brothers, we will sing the Te Deum and cover the pillars of the church with satin, and light all the

wax candles and all the hanging lamps, and we will celebrate a great feast.

"As long as the monastery has stood, it has been an abode of terror and abomination, but for all their sufferings' sake, who have lived here, God has been gracious. And now all danger is past.

"God has crowned the struggle with victory, and this which ye here see, is the sign that Antichrist shall not be worshiped on Capitolium.

"For in order that the words of the sibyl should not remain unfulfilled, God has sent the false image of Christ, which bears Antichrist's words in its crown, and he has permitted us to worship and adore it as though he had been the great miracle-worker.

"But now we may rest in joy and peace, for the sibyl's vague speech is fulfilled, and homage has here been paid Antichrist.

"Great is God, the Almighty, who has suffered our cruel fear to come to naught, and who has accomplished His will without the world's beholding the corrupted image of the son of man.

"Happy is the monastery of Aracoeli which rests in God's protection, and does His will and is blessed by His overflowing grace."

Having said these words the prior took the false image in his hands, walked down through the church and opened the main portal. There he stepped out upon the platform. Below him lay the high and broad staircase, with its one hundred and nineteen marble steps leading down from Capitolium as into an abyss. And raising the image above his head he cried in a loud voice: "Anatema Antikristo," and hurled it from Capitolium Hill down into the world.

III

ON THE BARRICADE

WHEN the English lady awoke next morning, she missed her image and wondered where she should seek it. She believed that no one but the monks of Aracoeli could have taken it. And she hurried to Capitolium to spy and search.

When she came to the great marble staircase leading up to Capitolium, her heart beat in wild delight, for lo ! on the lowest step lay the very one she was seeking. She seized the image, threw her cloak round it and hastening home, placed it again on the pedestal. But as she fell into contemplation of its beauty, she found that the crown had received a dent. She lifted it off to see how great the damage was, and at the same moment her eyes fell upon the inscription which she herself had engraved : " My kingdom is only of this world."

Then she knew that this was the false image of Christ and that the right one was restored to Aracoeli.

She despaired of ever having it again, and she decided to depart from Rome on the following day, for she did not wish to remain there, when she no longer possessed the image.

But when she left she took the false image with her, because it reminded her of the one she loved, and it accompanied her on all her journeys.

Peace she found nowhere, but traveled constantly,

and thus the image was carried about through the whole world. And wherever the image came it seemed as though Christ's dominion decreased without anyone rightly understanding why. For nothing appeared more powerless than this poor image of elm arrayed in glass beads and brass rings.

When the rich English lady who first owned the image was dead it came as heirloom to another rich English lady, who also traveled continually, and from this one to a third.

Once, and that was while the first English lady still lived, the image came to Paris.

When it entered the great city a rebellion was in progress. Crowds of people marched wildly shrieking through the streets, crying for bread. They plundered the shops and threw stones at the palaces of the rich. The troops advanced against them, whereupon they tore up the pavement, piled vehicles and household goods into heaps and built themselves barricades.

Now when the rich English lady came riding in her great coach, the multitude rushed upon it, compelled her to leave it, and dragged it forward to one of the barricades.

In trying to roll the carriage up among the thousand things forming the barricade, one of the large trunks fell to the ground. The cover burst open, and among other things which rolled out, was also the ejected image of Christ.

The people threw themselves upon it for the purpose of plundering it, but soon discovering that all his finery was false and entirely worthless, they began to laugh and scoff at it.

It passed from hand to hand among the rebels, until one of them, bending forward to look at the crown, happened to see the words engraved there: "My kingdom is only of this world."

Immediately the man proclaimed this in a loud voice, whereupon all cried that the little image should be their emblem. They carried it to the top of the barricade and placed it there as a standard.

Among those who defended the barricade was a man, who was not a poor laborer but a scholar whose whole life had been spent in study. He knew the troubles and distress which tortured the people, and his heart overflowed with compassion, so that he was constantly seeking after means for bettering their lot. For thirty years he had written and brooded, without finding any help. On hearing the tocsin, he obeyed it and rushed out on the street.

He had seized a weapon and gone with the combatants, thinking that the mystery, which he had been unable to explain, might be solved by main force and power, and that the poor might through combat be able to better their condition.

All day he stood there fighting, and the people fell round about him, blood spattered him in the face, and life's wretchedness seemed to him greater and more deplorable than ever before.

But as often as the smoke drifted away, there glittered before his eyes the little image which, during the tumult, stood undisturbed on top of the barricade.

And every time he saw the image, the words: "My kingdom is only of this world," crossed his brain. At last it seemed to him as though the words wrote

themselves in the very air and fluttered before his eyes now in fire, now in blood, now in smoke.

He became calm. He stood there with the gun in his hand, but he ceased to fight. Suddenly he knew that these were the words which he had been searching for during his whole life. He knew what to say to the people, and it was this poor image that had given him the solution.

He would go out into the world and proclaim: "Your kingdom is only of this world.

"Therefore ye must take thought for this life, and live as brothers. And ye shall divide your riches, so that no one shall be rich and no one poor. And ye shall all work and the earth shall be possessed by all, and ye shall all be equal.

"No one shall hunger, no one shall be tempted to luxuriance, and no one shall suffer want in his old age.

"And ye must bear in mind to work for everybody's happiness, for there is no compensation awaiting you. Your kingdom is only of this world."

All this passed through his brain, while he yet stood on the barricade, and when the thought became clear to him, he laid down his weapon, and lifted it no more in strife or bloodshed.

Immediately after that the barricade was attacked anew and taken. The troops advanced victoriously and quelled the insurrection, and before evening peace and order prevailed all over the great city.

Then the English lady sent out servants to search for her lost possessions. What they found first of all on the assaulted barricade was the ejected image from Aracoeli.

But the man, who, during the conflict, had been taught by the image, began to proclaim a new doctrine called socialism, but which is an antichristianity.

And that it loves and teaches and suffers and denies itself as Christianity and is similar to it in all respects, just as the false image from Aracoeli is in all respects similar to the right image of Christ.

And like the false image, it says: "My kingdom is only of this world." And although the image which published the doctrine is obscure and unknown, the same is not true of the doctrine, for that goes through the whole world reforming and redeeming it.

Day by day it is being spread. It passes through all countries and bears many names, and is alluring for the reason that it promises earthly happiness and delight to all, and draws adherents more than anything which has gone forth through the world since the time of Christ.

FIRST BOOK

"Then great distress shall prevail."

I

MONGIBELLO

TOWARDS the end of 1870 there lived in Palermo a poor boy whose name was Gaetano Alagona. That was fortunate for him. Had he not been one of the ancient Alagona family, he would probably have been left to starve. But the Jesuits in Santa Maria in Gesu, had taken pity on him and received him into the convent school.

One day as he was studying his lesson, a father came and called him out of the schoolroom, because a relative wished to see him. What, a relative! He had always heard that all his relations were dead. But Father Josef declared that this was a real live signora, who was related to him and wanted to take him out of the convent. It became worse and worse. Did she want to take him out of the convent? Surely it was not in her power to do that! He was to become a monk, was he not?

He did not want to see that signora at all. Couldn't Father Josef tell her that Gaetano would never leave the convent, and that it was no use asking

him. No, Father Josef said, it would not do to let her go away without seeing him, and he half dragged Gaetano into the reception-room. There she stood over by the window. She was gray-haired, her complexion was brown, her eyes black and as round as beads. She wore a lace mantilla on her head, and her black dress was threadbare and somewhat green like Father Josef's very oldest caftan.

She made the sign of the cross when she saw Gaetano. "God be praised, he is a genuine Alagona!" she said, and kissed him on the hand.

She said she was sorry that Gaetano had reached his twelfth year without any of his own people having inquired after him. But she had not known that there was any one of the other branch living. How then had she learned it now? Luca had read the name in a newspaper. It had appeared among those who had received prizes. It was now half a year ago, but it was a long journey to Palermo. She had been obliged to save and save to get traveling money. She had not been able to come before. But she felt she must see him. Santissima madre! how happy it had made her! It was she, Donna Elisa, who was an Alagona. Her husband, who was dead, had been an Antonelli. There was one more Alagona, that was her brother. He also lived in Diamante. But Gaetano perhaps did not know where Diamante was. The boy shook his head. Well, she thought as much.

"Diamante is situated on Monte Chiaro. Do you know where Monte Chiaro is?"

"No."

She raised her eyebrows and looked roguish.

"Monte Chiaro lies on Etna, if you know where Etna lies?"

It came so anxiously, as if it were asking altogether too much that Gaetano should know anything of Etna. And they laughed all three; both she, Father Josef and Gaetano.

She seemed a different person entirely, after she had made them laugh. Will you come and see Diamante and Etna and Monte Chiaro?" she asked suddenly. "Etna, you must see. It is the greatest mountain in the world. Etna is a king, and the mountains round about lie on their knees and dare not lift their eyes towards its face."

And she began to tell all about Etna. No doubt she imagined it would tempt him.

And such was really the case, that Gaetano had never reflected upon what sort of a mountain Etna was. It had never occurred to him that it had snow on the top of its head, forest of oak in its beard, grapevine round its waist, and that it stood knee-deep in orange groves. And down from it, great, broad, black rivers came bursting forth. Those were wonderful streams: they flowed without murmur, their waves were not caused by wind, the poorest swimmer could cross them without any bridge. He guessed that it was the lava she meant. And it pleased her that he could guess it. He had brains evidently. He was a genuine Alagona.

And then how large it was! Only fancy that one needed three days to ride around it and three days to ride to the top and down again! And that there were fifty cities besides Diamante and fourteen large forests and two hundred small mountains, which by

the way, however, were not so very small, though Etna was so immense, that one did not notice them any more than one would a swarm of flies on a church roof. And that there were caves that would hold a whole army, and hollow trees, where a large flock of sheep could find shelter during a storm.

Everything strange and wonderful, it seemed, was to be found on Etna. There were rivers which one must beware of. The water in them was so cold, that one might die if one drank thereof. There were other rivers which flowed only in the daytime, and others which flowed only in winter, and others running almost continually deep down under the earth. And there were warm springs and sulphur springs and mud volcanoes.

It would perhaps be a pity if Gaetano was not allowed to see it, for it was so grand. It stood against the sky like a magnificent tent. It was as variegated as a merry-go-round. He would like to see it morning and evening, then it was red; he would like to see it at night, then it was white. He would also wish to know if it were true that it could take all colors, that it could become blue, black, brown and violet? Or whether it wore a beauty veil like a signora? Whether it was a table covered with plush cloths? Whether it had a tunic of gold threads and a mantle of peacock feathers?

He would also like to know all about old King Arturo sitting there in a cave. Donna Elisa said that he certainly lived on Etna still, because once when the bishop of Catania rode across the mountain, three of his mules ran away from him and the servant, who sought after them, found them in the

cave with King Arturo. Then the king bade the servant tell the bishop, that when his wounds were healed, he would come with his knights of the round table, and put everything to rights, that was out of order in Sicily. And anyone who had eyes to see with, knew very well that King Arturo had not yet issued from the grotto.

Gaetano would not suffer her to tempt him, but he thought that he might be permitted to show her a little kindness. She was still standing, so he went after a chair for her. He hoped she would not imagine he would go with her, because of this attention. But he really enjoyed hearing her tell about her mountain. Its knowing so many tricks was queer. It was not at all like Monte Pellegrino near Palermo, which just stood there. Etna could smoke like a chimney and emit fire like a gas-lamp. It could rumble, tremble, vomit lava, throw stones, scatter ashes, predict what the weather would be and collect rain. If Mongibello only stirred, city after city fell, as if the houses had been so many pieces of cardboard placed edgewise.

Etna was called Mongibello, because that meant the mountain of mountains. It certainly deserved to be so called.

Gaetano saw that she positively believed he would not be able to resist. She had so many wrinkles in her face, and when she laughed they joined like a net. He stood watching this. It looked so queer. But he was not caught in that net yet. She now wondered if Gaetano would have courage to come to Etna. For inside the mountain were many fettered giants and a black castle, which was watched by a

dog with many heads. There was also a large smithy and a lame blacksmith with only one eye right in the middle of his forehead. And worst of all was, that in the very depths of the mountain was a brimstone lake, which boiled like a kettle of oil and in it lay Lucifero and the condemned. No, he would probably not have courage to come, she said.

Otherwise it was not dangerous to live there, for the mountain feared the saints. Donna Elisa said that it feared many saints, but most of all Santa Agata of Catania. If the Catanians always behaved themselves as they should towards her, neither earthquakes nor lava could harm them.

Gaetano stood quite close to her, and he laughed at everything she said. How came he to be there, and why could he not help laughing? This is a wonderful signora.

In order not to deceive her, he said suddenly: "Donna Elisa, I'm going to be a monk."—"O, are you?" she said. Then, without anything further, she began again to tell about the mountain.

She said that now he must listen carefully; now she came to the most important part. He should go with her down the south side of the mountain, till they came near the large plain of Catania, there he would see quite a large, broad, semicircular valley. But it was entirely black, the lava streams came flowing down into it from all directions. There were only stones, not a blade of grass.

But what was Gaetano's idea of the lava? Donna Elisa supposed he thought it lay smooth and even on Etna, just as it lies on the street. But in Etna there was so much deviltry. Could he conceive that

all there was of snakes and dragons and witches that lay boiling in the lava, ran out with it when there was an eruption. There they lay crawling and creeping, intertwining and trying to creep up on cold ground and still keeping each other behind in misery till the lava stiffened around them, and extricate themselves they could not. No, indeed!

But the lava was not as portionless as he imagined. Although grass did not grow there, might there not be other things to see? But what that was, he very likely never could guess. It groped and ran, it tumbled and crept, it went on its knees, on its head, on its elbow. It came up the sides of the valley and down the sides of the valley; it had only prickles and knobs, it had dust and spider web in its wig and as many joints as a worm. Could it be anything but the cactus? Did he know that the cactus broke ground on the lava like a farmer? Did he know that none but the fichidins had any power over the lava?

Now she looked at Father Josef and made a funny droll face. That cactus was the best hobgoblin on Etna, but then hobgoblin was hobgoblin. The cactus was a Saracen, for it kept female slaves. No sooner had the cactus taken root somewhere than it wanted the almond trees close beside it. The almond trees are elegant, shining signoras. They hardly dare to venture out on the black lava, but that does not help them. Out they must, and once out, they must remain there. O, Gaetano should see if he came. In the spring when the almond trees stand white with blossoms on the black lava in the midst of the gray cactus, they are so innocent and beautiful, that

one feels like weeping over them as over kidnapped princesses.

Now finally he should learn where Monte Chiaro lay. It shot up from the bottom of the black valley she had just described. She tried to make her umbrella stand on the floor. It stood like that. It stood straight up. It had never thought of either sitting or lying. And just as black as the valley was, just as green was Monte Chiaro. It was all palms and vines. It was a gentleman in a big-flowered dressing-gown. It was a king with a crown on his head. It carried all Diamante in its hair.

Now a little while ago Gaetano had a great desire to seize her hand. But perhaps it would never do? He did it however. He drew her hand towards him as though it were a stolen treasure. But what should he do with it? Caress it, perhaps? Suppose he tried very gently with one finger, then perhaps she would not notice it? Perhaps she would not notice if he took two fingers? Perhaps she would not even notice if he kissed her hand? She talked and talked. She did not notice it at all.

There was still so much to tell. And could anything be more droll than her story of Diamante!

She said that at one time the city had lain at the bottom of the valley. Then came the lava and peeped fiery red above the edge of the valley. What, what, had the day of judgment come? The city hastily took all its houses on its back, on its head and under the arms and ran up Monte Chiaro, which lay quite close at hand.

Up the mountain the city ran zig-zag. When it was up quite far enough, it threw down a city gate

and a bit of city wall. Afterwards it ran round the mountain spirally and threw down the houses. Poor people's houses were allowed to tumble down as they would and could. There was no time for anything else. One could not ask anything better than crowding and confusion and crooked streets. Indeed one could not. The principal street went in a spiral round the mountain, just as the city had run, and all along the road it had flung a church here and a palace there. But some sort of order there had been nevertheless, for the best was up highest. When the city had reached the summit of the mountain, it had laid out a market-place, and there it had set down the court-house and the cathedral, and the old palazzo Geraci.

But if he, Gaetano Alagona, would accompany her to Diamante, she would take him with her up to the market-place on the top of the mountain and show him the stretches of land the ancient Alagonas had owned on Etna and on the plains of Catania, and where on the inland mountains they had raised their strongholds. For up there one saw all this and still more. One saw the whole sea.

It had not occurred to Gaetano that she had been talking long, but Father Josef seemed impatient. "Why, now, we have come to your own home, Donna Elisa," he said gently.

But she assured Father Josef that she had nothing worth seeing. First of all she wished to show Gaetano the large house at the corso, called the summer palace. It was not as beautiful as the palazzo Geraci, but it was large, and when the Alagonas were still rich and prosperous, they used to come there in

the summer to be near Etna's snow. Well, as she had said, towards the street there was nothing to see, but it had a delightful courtyard with open colonades in both stories. And on the roof was a terrace, the floor of which was of blue and white tiles, and in every tile the Alagona coat-of-arms was burned in. Surely he would like to see that?

It occurred to Gaetano that Donna Elisa might be used to having children come and sit in her lap, when she was at home. Perhaps she would not notice it if he too came. So he tried. And such was the case. She was used to it. She did not notice it at all.

She only continued to speak about the palace. There were large rooms of state, where the old Alagonas had danced and played. There was a great hall with a music gallery, there was old furniture, and pendulum clocks in small white alabaster temples, which stood on a base of black ebony. In these rooms no one lived, but she would take him there. Perhaps he had imagined that she lived in the summer palace? Oh, no, her brother Don Ferrante, lived there. He was a merchant, and had his shop in the first story, and as he had not yet provided himself with a signora, everything upstairs remained as it was.

Gaetano wondered if it would do to remain sitting in her lap any longer. It was strange that she did not notice anything. And that was fortunate, else she might think he had given up becoming a monk.

But just at present she was more than ever occupied with her own. A faint tint of red rose to her cheeks, beneath all the brown, and she raised her

eyebrows several times in the drollest manner. So she began to tell about herself.

It seemed as if Donna Elisa had the very smallest house in the whole city. It lay opposite the summer palace, but that was its only merit. She had a little shop where she sold medals and wax candles and everything belonging to divine service.

But with all respect for Father Josef, there was not much profit in that kind of trade nowadays, however it might have been formerly. Behind the store was a small workshop where her husband had stood and carved images of saints and rosary beads, for he had been an artist, had Signor Antonelli. And by the side of the workshop were a couple of small rat holes. One could hardly turn round in them, one had to squat as in the prisons of the old kings. And up one flight were two little hen-coops. In one of them she had put some hay for a nest and a few perches.

There Gaetano could keep himself if he would come and live with her.

Gaetano thought he would like to caress her cheek. She would probably feel very sorry that he could not go with her. Perhaps he might allow himself to caress her. He gazed slyly at Father Josef, who sat looking straight down at the floor and sighing, as was his wont. He was not thinking of Gaetano, and she, she took no notice of it at all.

She said she had a maid-servant whose name was Pacifica, and a man-servant whose name was Luca. But they were not much help to her, for Pacifica was old, and since she had become deaf, she had become so irritable that she could not be allowed to help in the store. And Luca, who really was a carver and

ought to carve images of saints, which she might sell, he never found time to stand in the workshop and carve, but was always out in the garden tending the flowers. Yes, to be sure, they had also a garden among the rocks on Monte Chiaro. But he must not imagine that that was of any account. She had nothing equal to what he was used to in the convent, naturally Gaetano could understand that. But she wanted him very much, because he was one of the old Alagona family. And at home she and Luca and Pacifica had said to each other: "What do we mind a little more care?" No, the Madonna knew they did not. But now the question was would he go through something for the sake of living with them?

And now she had finished, and now Father Josef asked what Gaetano intended to answer. It was the prior's will that Gaetano should decide himself. And one had nothing against his going out into the world, because he was the last of his race.

Gaetano glided slowly down from Donna Elisa's lap. But to answer! That was not an easy matter. It was very hard to say no to that signora. Father Josef came to his aid. "Ask the signora to allow you to answer in a couple of hours, Gaetano. The boy has never thought of anything else than to be a monk," he said by way of explanation to Donna Elisa.

She rose, took her umbrella, endeavoring to look cheerful, but she had tears in her eyes.

Surely, surely he must consider, she said. But had he known Diamante he would not have needed to. Now only peasants lived there, but at one time there had been a bishop and many priests, and a great number of monks. They were gone now, but they

were not forgotten. Ever since that time Diamante was a holy city. More festivals were celebrated there then elsewhere, and there were hosts of saints, and thither came, even now, a great number of pilgrims. He who lived in Diamante could never forget God. He was almost half priest. So for that matter he could very well come. But he ought to reflect on it, if he so wished. She would come again to-morrow.

Gaetano behaved himself very badly. He turned away from her and rushed out of the door. He did not say a word about feeling grateful because she had come. He knew that Father Josef had expected it, but he could not. When he thought of the great Mongibello, which he never should see, and of Donna Elisa, who would never come again, and of the school and the narrow convent garden and a whole life of imprisonment! Father Josef might expect ever so much of him; Gaetano must flee.

It was also high time. When Gaetano was ten steps outside the door, he burst into tears. Poor Donna Elisa! O, that she should be obliged to return alone! That Gaetano could not accompany her!

He heard Father Josef approaching, and he pressed his face against the wall. If he could only cease sobbing!

Father Josef went sighing and muttering, as he always did. When he came near Gaetano, he stopped and drew deeper sighs than ever.

"It is Mongibello, Mongibello," said Father Josef, "No one can resist Mongibello."

Gaetano answered him by weeping still more violently.

"It is the mountain that tempts," mumbled Father

Josef. "Mongibello is like the whole world, all the beauteousness and charms of earth are there, and plants and climates and wonders. The whole earth comes all at once and tempts him."

Gaetano felt that Father Josef spoke the truth. It seemed as though the whole world stretched out strong arms to seize him. He felt that he must cling to the wall in order not to be snatched away.

"It is better for him to see the world," said Father Josef. "He would only be longing after it, if he remained in the convent. If he is allowed to see the world, perhaps he will begin to long for heaven again."

Gaetano did not yet understand what Father Josef meant, when he felt himself lifted in his arms, carried back into the reception-room and put down in Donna Elisa's lap.

"Since you have won him, Donna Elisa, you must take him," said Father Josef. "You must show him Mongibello, and try if you can keep him."

But when Gaetano once more sat with Donna Elisa, he felt so happy, that it was impossible for him to flee from her again. He was as much a captive as though he had entered Mongibello, and the mountain wall had closed behind him

II

FRA GAETANO

GAETANO had lived one month with Donna Elisa and been as happy as a child could be. Just to travel with Donna Elisa had been like riding behind gazelles and birds of Paradise, but to live with her was to be borne on a litter of gold, shaded by parasols.

So the famous Franciscan, Father Gondo, came to Diamante, and Donna Elisa and Gaetano went up to the market-place to hear him. For Father Gondo never preached in the church, but always gathered the people around him at the market-place, or city gate.

The whole square was thronged with people, but Gaetano, who sat on the railing of the court-house steps, saw Father Gondo plainly standing on the curb of the well. He wondered mostly if it could be true, that the monk wore a hair shirt under his gown, and that the rope, which he had round his waist, was full of knots and iron points to serve him as scourge.

What Father Gondo said Gaetano did not understand, but shiver after shiver passed through him at the thought that he now beheld a saint.

When the Father had spoken about an hour, he motioned with his hand that he wished to rest a moment. And, stepping down from the curb, he

seated himself and leaned his face in his hands. While the monk sat thus, Gaetano heard a dull murmur. He had never heard anything like that before. He looked around to learn what it could be. It was the whole multitude speaking.

"Blessed, blessed, blessed!" they all said at once. Most of them only whispered and mumbled, no one spoke out loud, their devotion was too great for that. And all had simultaneously found the same words: "Blessed, blessed!" reverberated all over the market-place. "Blessing upon thy lips, blessing upon thy tongue, blessing upon thy heart!"

The voices sounded dull, suppressed by weeping and emotion, and yet it seemed as though a storm had swept through the air. It was like the sound in thousands of sea-shells.

This touched Gaetano more by far than the monk's sermon. He was at a loss what to do; for this gentle murmur affected him deeply, it seemed as though it would stifle him. He climbed up on the balustrade, raised himself above all the others, and began to repeat the same as they, only much louder, so that his cry penetrated all the others.

Donna Elisa hearing this, appeared to become displeased. She drew Gaetano down, and would not remain any longer, but went home with him.

But in the middle of the night Gaetano rose from his bed. He put on his clothes, tied together his possessions in a bundle, put his hat on his head and his shoes under his arms. He was going to run away. He could no longer bear to live with Donna Elisa.

Diamante and Mongibello were nothing to him,

since he had heard Father Gondo. Everything was trivial compared with being like Father Gondo, and be blessed by the people. Gaetano would not be able to live if he could not sit by the market-place well and relate legends.

But if Gaetano continued to roam in Donna Elisa's garden, eating peaches and mandarins, he would never hear the great sea of human beings surging around him.

He must go forth and become a hermit on Etna. He must dwell in one of the large caves and live on roots and fruit. He would never meet any human being, he would never cut his hair, and he would wear nothing but a few dirty rags. But after ten or twenty years he would return to the world. Then he would look like a beast and speak like an angel.

That would be something quite different from going about dressed in velvet clothes, and shining leather hat. That would be different from sitting in the shop with Donna Elisa, taking down saint after saint from the shelf and hearing her tell what they had done. Several times he had taken a knife and a piece of wood and tried to carve images of saints. It was very difficult, but it would be much worse to make a saint of himself. However, he was not afraid of difficulties or privations.

He stole out of his room, across the attic and down the attic stairs. There remained only to pass through the shop, and out into the street; but on the last step he checked himself. A faint glimmer of light was visible through a crack of the door at the left of the stairs.

There was the door to Donna Elisa's room, and

Gaetano dared not go farther, since his foster-mother had a light burning. If she did not sleep, she would hear him when he opened the heavy bolts of the shop door. He seated himself quietly on a step to wait.

Suddenly it occurred to him that Donna Eliza was obliged to sit up as late as this in the night and work to provide clothes and food for him. That she loved him so much and would do this for him, affected him deeply. And he understood how much it would grieve her, should he now go away.

When he thought of that, he commenced to cry.

But at the same time he began to chide Donna Elisa in his thoughts. How could she be so stupid as to grieve, because he went away. It would be such a joy to her, when he became a holy man. It would be her reward, for going to Palermo after him.

He wept all the more violently, while he was thus comforting Donna Elisa. It was a pity, that she could not understand how richly she would be rewarded.

Why, there was no need at all of feeling sad. Only ten years would Gaetano live over yonder on the mountain, and then he would come back as the renowned hermit Fra Gaetano. Then he would come walking along the street in Diamante, followed by a great throng of people, just as Father Gondo. And there would be flags in the street, and all the houses would be decorated with quilts, and cloths and wreaths. Then he would stop outside Donna Elisa's shop, and Donna Elisa, not recognizing him at first, would be near falling on her knees to him.

That, however, should not happen, for he would fall on his knees to Donna Elisa and beg forgiveness of her. "Gaetano," Donna Elisa would then answer, "You give me an ocean of joy for a little brooklet of sorrow. Should I not forgive you?"

Gaetano imagined he saw all this, and it was so beautiful, that he wept all the more. He only feared that Donna Elisa would hear how he sobbed and come out and find him. And then she would not let him go.

He must talk reason with her. Should he ever be of greater joy to her, than if he now went?

It was not Donna Elisa alone, it was also Luca and Pacifica, who would be so glad, when he returned a holy man.

They would all go with him up to the market place. There would be still more flags than in the streets, and Gaetano would speak from the court-house steps. But from all streets and alleys the people would come streaming forth.

Then Gaetano would speak in such a manner, that they would all fall on their knees crying: "Bless us, Fra Gaetano, bless us!"

After that he would never more go away from Diamante. He would take up his abode under the large staircase outside Donna Elisa's shop.

And they would bring to him the sick, and those in trouble would make pilgrimages to him.

When the Syndic of Diamante went by, he would kiss Gaetano's hand.

Donna Elisa would sell Fra Gaetano's image in her shop.

And Donna Elisa's goddaughter, Giannita, would

bow down to Fra Gaetano, and never more call him a stupid monk boy.

And Donna Elisa would be so happy.

. . . . .

Ah . . . Gaetano started up and awoke. It was morning and Donna Elisa and Pacifica stood looking at him. And Gaetano sat on the step with his shoes under his arm, his hat on his head and the bundle at his feet. But Donna Elisa and Pacifica were weeping. "He wanted to run away from us," they said.

"Why do you sit here, Gaetano?"

"Donna Elisa, I wanted to run away."

Gaetano was in good spirits and answered as boldly as if it had been the most natural thing in the world.

"You wanted to run away?" repeated Donna Elisa.

"I wanted to live on Etna and be a hermit."

"And why do you sit here now?"

"I don't know, Donna Elisa, I must have fallen asleep."

Donna Elisa could no longer hide her grief. She pressed her hands to her heart, as though she felt a terrible pain, and she wept violently.

"But now I will stay, Donna Elisa," said Gaetano.

"You, stay!" cried Donna Elisa. "You may just as well go. Look at him, Pacifica, that is the way an ingrate looks! He is no Alagona. He is an adventurer."

The blood rushed to Gaetano's face, and he arose and struck out with his hand in a way that greatly amazed Donna Elisa. All the men of her family had done just like that. It was her father and her

grandfather; she recognized all the authoritative Alagona gentlemen.

"You talk like that, Donna Elisa, because you know nothing," said the boy. "No, no, you know nothing, you don't know why I must serve God. But you shall know it now! You see, it was long ago. Father and mother were very poor, and we had nothing to eat, and then father went away to seek work, and he never came back, and mother and we children were starving. Then mother said: 'We will go and try to find father!' And we went. And night came and it rained heavily, and in one place a whole river ran across the road. Mother asked at a house, if we might remain there over night. No, they turned us out. Mother and we children stood weeping on the road. Then mother tied up her clothes and stepped down into the stream, which rushed across the road. She had little sister on her arm and big sister by the hand, and a large bundle on her head. I walked behind as close as I could. I saw mother make a false step. The bundle on her head fell into the stream, mother grasped after it and so lost little sister. She tried to catch little sister, and big sister was snatched away. Mother threw herself after them, and the river took her also. I became frightened, and ran on land. Father Josef has told me that I escaped in order that I might serve God for the dead ones and pray for them. And for that reason it was first decided, that I should become a monk, and that I now wanted to go to Etna and be a hermit. There is nothing left for me to do, Donna Elisa, except to serve God."

Donna Elisa was wholly vanquished: "Yes, yes, Gaetano," she said, "but it gives me so much pain. I don't wish to have you go away from me."

"Why, I am not going," said Gaetano. He was in such a good humor, that he felt like laughing. "I am not going."

"Shall I speak to the rector about sending you to a training school?" asked Donna Elisa humbly.

"No, don't you understand anything, Donna Elisa, don't you understand anything? Haven't you heard me say that I don't want to go away from you. I have thought of something else."

"What have you thought of?" she asked sadly.

"What do you suppose I did, while I sat there on the step. I dreamed, Donna Elisa. I dreamed that I was running away. Yes, Donna Elisa, I was standing in the shop, trying to open the shop-door, but I could not, on account of the many locks. I stood in the dark, opening lock after lock, and there were always new ones. I made a fearful noise, and I thought: 'Now, Donna Elisa will surely come.' At last the door opened, but just as I was about to rush out, I felt your hand at the back of my neck, and you pulled me in, and I kicked and kicked, and I struck you, because you would not let me go. But, Donna Elisa, you had a light with you, and then I saw that it was not you but mother. I dared not struggle any more, but felt afraid, mother being dead. But mother took the bundle I carried, and commenced taking out what was in it. Mother laughed, and looked pleased, and I felt so happy, because she was not vexed with me. It was very singular. What she took out of the bundle was all

the little images of saints which I had carved, while sitting with you in the shop, and they were so beautiful. 'Can you carve such beautiful images now, Gaetano?' said mother. 'Yes,' I answered. 'Then you can serve God with that,' said mother. And just as mother said that, you woke me."

Gaetano looked triumphantly at Donna Elisa.

"What did mother mean by that?"

Donna Elisa only wondered. Gaetano threw his head backwards and laughed.

"Mother meant that you should let me be an apprentice, so that I might serve God by carving beautiful images of angels and saints, Donna Elisa."

III

THE GODSISTER

ON the noble Isle of Sicily, where more remains of ancient custom than anywhere else in the South, it is still in vogue that every person yet in childhood chooses for her or himself a godbrother or godsister, who will carry his or her child, should there be one, to the baptismal font.

But this is by no means the only use which godchildren are to each other. Godchildren must love each other, serve each other and revenge each other. In a godbrother's ear a man may bury his secrets. He may intrust him with both his money and his betrothed without being betrayed. Godchildren are faithful to each other, as if they were born of the same mother, because their covenant is concluded before San Giovanni Battista, who of all the saints is most feared.

It is also customary that poor people bring their half-grown children to the rich and beg that they might be godchildren with their young sons and daughters. What a joyful sight, is it not, to see on John the Baptist's day all these little children, in holiday attire, roaming about through the great cities seeking godsisters or godbrothers! If the parents suceed in giving their son a rich godbrother, they are as happy as if they were able to leave him for inheritance a country estate.

At first when Gaetano came to Diamante, there was a little one who frequently went in and out of Donna Elisa's shop. She had a red cloak and peaked hood and eight heavy, black curls, bursting forth from beneath the hood. Her name was Giannita and she was daughter to Donna Olivia, who sold vegetables. But Donna Elisa was her godmother, and therefore the latter was anxious to do something for her.

Well, when midsummer came, Donna Elisa ordered a carriage and rode down to Catania, which lies four whole miles from Diamante. She had Giannita with her, and both were in holiday-garb. Donna Elisa was dressed in black silk with beads, and Giannita had a white muslin dress with flowered borders. In her hand Giannita carried a basket of flowers, and uppermost among the flowers lay a pomegranate.

The journey passed pleasantly for Donna Elisa and Giannita. Having at length arrived at the white Catania, which lies gleaming on the black lava foundation, they drove up to the most beautiful palace in the city.

It was so tall and great, that the poor little Giannita felt very much frightened at being obliged to enter there. But Donna Elisa walked bravely in, and was ushered into the presence of Cavaliere Palmeri and his wife, who owned the house.

Donna Elisa reminded Signora Palmeri, that they were childhood friends, and begged that Giannita should be allowed to become godsister with her young daughter. This was granted, and the young signorina was called in. She was a little marvel of pink silk and Venetian lace, large black eyes and

thick bushy hair. Her little body was so slight and thin that one hardly noticed it at all.

Giannita held out to her the basket of flowers. She gazed long and cautiously at Giannita, walked around her and fell in love with her smooth even curls. As soon as she had seen those, she ran after a knife, divided the pomegranate and gave Giannita one half. While they ate the apple, they held each other by the hand and both repeated :

"Sister, sister, sister mine!
Thou art mine and I am thine,
Thine my meat, thine my cot,
Thine my joy, thine my lot,
Thine my place in paradise."

Then they kissed each other and called each other godsister.

"Now you must always be faithful to me, godsister," said the little signorina, and both of them were very serious and deeply affected.

They had quickly become such good friends, that they wept at parting.

But after that twelve years passed, and the two godsisters lived each in her world and never met.

During all this time Giannita stayed quietly in her home and did not come once to Catania.

But then something wonderful actually happened. Giannita sat one afternoon in the room beyond the shop embroidering. Being very skilful at this she was often overwhelmed with work. But embroidering is trying to the eyes, and it was dark in Giannita's room. Therefore she had placed the door ajar, that she might get in a little more light.

Immediately after the clock had struck four, old

Rosa Alfari, the miller's widow, came walking by. Donna Olivia's shop looked very attractive when seen from the street. One looked in through the open vaulted door upon great baskets of fresh green vegetables, and variegated fruit, and far away in the back ground one saw the outlines of Giannita's pretty head. Rosa Alfari stopped and began to chat with Donna Olivia, only because her shop looked so pleasant.

Worry and distress always accompanied old Rosa Alfari. Now she was sad because she was obliged to journey alone to Catania the following night. "It's unfortunate that the mail-stage does not arrive at Diamante before ten," she said, "I'll fall asleep on the way, and then perhaps my money will be stolen. And what shall I do when I come to Catania at two o'clock in the night?"

Just then Giannita's voice was suddenly heard saying: "won't you take me with you to Catania, Donna Alfari?" She asked it half jokingly without expecting an answer.

But Rosa Alfari became eager. "Deo, child, would you go with me?" she said. "Would you really?"

Giannita came out into the shop, flushed with joy. "If I would!" she said. "I have not been in Catania for twelve years."

But Rosa Alfari gazed with delight upon her, for Giannita was tall and strong, her eyes were bright, and she had a gay unconcerned smile on her lips. She was a glorious traveling companion.

"Just make yourself ready," said the old lady. "You'll accompany me at ten o'clock; that's decided."

The following morning Giannita was strolling about the streets of Catania. All the while she was thinking of her godsister. She was strangely affected at being so near her again. She loved her godsister, not only because San Giovanni had commanded the people to love their godsisters and godbrothers. She had adored the little child in the silk dress as the loveliest thing she had ever seen. It had almost become her idol.

Concerning the godsister, she knew that she was still unmarried and lived in Catania. Her mother had died, and she had not wished to desert her father, but had remained as hostess in his home. "I must manage to see her," thought Giannita.

As soon as Giannita met an elegant carriage, she thought: "That may be my godsister riding there." And she stared at the occupants to see if any one of them resembled the little girl with the thick hair and large eyes.

Giannita's heart commenced to beat violently. She had always longed for her godsister. She herself was still unmarried, because she loved a young image carver, Gaetano Alagona, and he had never shown the least inclination to marry her. Giannita had often felt angry with him for this, but that she never would be able to invite her godsister to her wedding aggravated her most of all. Besides, she had been so proud of her. She had considered herself superior to others, because she had such a godsister. Now that she was in the city should she go and see her? That would shed luster over her journey.

As she was thinking of this a newspaper boy came

running. "Giornale da Sicilia!" he cried. "The Palmeri affair! Great impostures!"

The tall Giannita seized the boy by the back of the neck, as he rushed by. "What do you say?" she cried. "You lie! You lie!" and she nearly struck him.

"Buy my paper, signora, before you strike me," said the boy. Giannita bought the paper and began to read. There she immediately found about the Palmeri affair. "As this case is discussed in court to-day," it read, "we will here render an account of the same." Giannita read and read. She read it over and over again, before she understood. There was not a muscle in her body which did not begin to tremble with fright, when finally she comprehended.

Her godsister's father, who had owned large vineyards, had become ruined, because a vine disease had laid them waste. And this was the least. He had also embezzled a charity fund intrusted to him. He was arrested, and to-day he would appear at court.

Giannita crushed together the paper, threw it on the street and trampled on it. That which brought such news deserved no better.

Afterwards she stood completely bewildered at the fact that this should be in store for her, when she came to Catania for the first time in twelve years. "O Lord," she said, "is there any meaning in this?"

At home in Diamante no one probably had cared to tell her what was going on. Was it a dispensation of Providence that she should be here on the very day of the trial?

"Listen, Donna Alfari," she said, "you may do what you please, but I must go up to the court."

Giannita was firm. Nothing could alter her decision. "Don't you understand that it is for this and not on your account that God has prevailed upon you to take me with you to Catania?" she said to Rosa Alfari.

Not for a moment did Giannita doubt that there was something supernatural in connection with all this.

Rosa Alfari was obliged to let her go, and she inquired the way to the Palace of Justice. She stood among street boys and rabble, and saw Cavaliere Palmeri on the bench of the accused. He was a distinguished looking gentleman with white imperial and a white mustache. Giannita recognized him.

She heard him sentenced to half a year's imprisonment, and to Giannita it seemed more obvious than ever that she was sent there by God. "Now my godsister may need me," she thought.

She went again out on the street and asked the way to Palazzo Palmeri. On the road a carriage passed her. She looked up and her eyes met those of the lady seated in the carriage. At the same moment something told her that that was her godsister. She who rode was pale and bent, and had beseeching eyes. Giannita felt drawn to her immediately. "You have made me happy many a time," she said, "because I have expected joy of you. Now, perhaps I shall be able to reward you."

Giannita was filled with solemnity, as she ascended the high white marble staircase to Palazzo Palmeri, but suddenly she was seized with doubt. "What

can God wish that I shall do for one brought up amid such splendor?" she thought. "Does our Lord forget that I am only poor Giannita from Diamante?"

She sent word to Signorina Palmeri, by a footman, that her godsister wished to speak with her. She was surprised, when the footman returned and answered, that she could not be received that day. Should she content herself with that? O no! O no!

"Tell the signorina, that I will wait here all day, for I must speak with her."

"The signorina moves away from the palace in half an hour," said the footman.

Giannita became frantic. "But I am her godsister, her godsister, don't you understand that?" she said to him. "I must speak with her." The footman smiled and did not stir.

But Giannita would not be turned away. Was she not sent by God? He must understand, she said, raising her voice. She came from Diamante and had not been in Catania for twelve years. Not before yesterday afternoon at four o'clock had it occurred to her to come here. He ought to think of that, not before yesterday afternoon at four o'clock.

The footman stood motionless and did not move. In hopes of softening him, Giannita was just going to relate the whole story, when the door was thrown open. Her godsister stood on the threshold. "Who speaks about four o'clock yesterday?" she said.

"It is a stranger, Signorina Micaela."

Giannita now rushed forward. It was no stranger at all. It was her godsister, Giannita from Diamante,

who came here twelve years ago with Donna Elisa. Did she not remember her? Did she not remember their having divided a pomegranate?

The signorina gave no heed to this. "What happened yesterday at four o'clock?" she asked anxiously.

"It was then I received God's command to go to you, godsister," said Giannita.

The other gazed at her in terror. "Come with me," she said, as though afraid, that the footman should know what Giannita had to tell her.

She walked through several rooms before she stopped. Then she turned round so suddenly that Giannita was startled. "Tell it instantly!" she said. "Torture me no longer!"

She was as tall as Giannita, but very unlike her. She was of a more slender build and she, the woman of the world, looked wilder and more untamed than the country girl. All that she felt was visible in her face. She did not even try to keep it concealed.

Giannita was so amazed at her impetuosity, that she could not answer immediately.

Her godsister then lifted in despair her arms above her head, and the words poured in torrents over her lips. She said she knew that Giannita had received command from God to bring her tidings of new misfortunes. She knew that God hated her.

Giannita clapped her hands together. God hate her! on the contrary.

"Yes, yes," said Signorina Palmeri. "It is so." And in her heart, fearing to hear Giannita's message, she continued talking. She did not allow her to speak, but interrupted her continually. The events

of the last days seemed to have so terrified her that she had no control over herself.

Surely Giannita must see that God hated her, she said. She had done something terrible. She had deserted her father, betrayed her father. Giannita had of course read the fifth commandment. Then she broke out anew in vehement questioning. Why didn't she speak out what she had to say? She expected nothing but evil. She was prepared.

But poor Giannita had no opportunity to say a word, for just as she was going to speak, the signorina became frightened and interrupted her. She related her history as if to prevail upon Giannita not to be hard towards her.

Giannita must not think that her misfortune consisted alone, in her not having her own carriage any longer, or box at the theater, or beautiful dresses, or attendance, or even a roof over her head. Nor was it enough that she now had lost all her friends, and had nowhere to ask for shelter. Nor was it misfortune enough, that she felt such a shame, that she could not lift her eyes to any person's face.

But it was something still worse.

She had seated herself and was silent a moment, while she rocked back and forth in distress. But when Giannita now began to talk, she interrupted her again.

Giannita could not imagine how much her father had loved her. He had allowed her to live in luxury and splendor like a princess.

She had not done much for him, had only let him devise grand things for her amusement. Her not marrying had been no sacrifice, for she had never

loved any one as much as her father, and her own home had been more magnificent than any one else's.

But one day her father had come to her and said: "They want to arrest me. They circulate reports that I have been stealing, but it isn't true."

She had believed him, and helped to keep him concealed from the Carabineers. And they had sought him in vain in Catania, on Etna, and all over Sicily.

But when the police could not find Cavaliere Palmeri, the people began to say: "It is some grand personages that help him, else one would have found him long ago." Then the prefect of Catania had called on her. She received him smilingly, and the prefect came as if to speak of roses and fair weather. Then he said: "Would the signorina glance at this little paper? Would the signorina read this little letter? Would the signorina observe this signature?" She read and read. And what did she see? Her father was not innocent. Her father had taken other people's money.

When the prefect had taken leave of her, she had gone to her father. "You are guilty," she said to him. "You may do what you like, but I can help you no more." Oh, she had not known what she said. She had always been very proud. She had not been able to bear that her name had become branded with dishonor. For a moment, she had wished her father dead, rather than have this happen to her. Perhaps she had said as much to him. She hardly knew what she had said.

But after that God had forsaken her. The most terrible things had happened. Her father had taken

her at her word. He had surrendered himself to justice. And ever since he had been in prison, he had not wished to see her. He did not answer her letters, and food, which she sent him, he returned, untouched. That was the hardest of all. He seemed to believe that she wanted to kill him.

She gazed at Giannita so anxiously, as if she expected her death-warrant.

"Why don't you tell me what you have to say?" she burst out. "You kill me."

But it was impossible to compel herself to be silent.

"You must know," she continued," that this palace is sold, and the purchaser has let it to an English lady, who will move in here to-day. But a few of her things were carried in here yesterday, and among these was a little image of the Christ-child.

"I saw it as I went through the vestibule, Giannita. They had taken it out of a portmanteau, and laid it out there on the floor. It was so badly used that no one cared about it. It had a dented crown, and a soiled swaddle, and all the little ornaments, which covered it, were rusty and injured. But when I saw it lying on the floor, I took it up and carried it into a room and placed it on a table. And while I did this, it occurred to me, that I should implore its aid. I fell on my knees before it and prayed long. 'Help me in my great need,' I said to the Christ-child.

"While I prayed, it seemed to me, that the image wished to answer. I lifted my head, and the child stood there, as dumb as before, but a pendulum clock began striking just then. It struck four times,

and it was as if it had said four words. It was as if the Christchild had answered a four-fold Yea to my prayer.

"This gave me courage, Giannita, so that to-day I rode up to court to see my father. But he turned not his eyes towards me during the whole time he stood before his judges.

"I availed myself of the opportunity when they were taking him away, and threw myself on my knees before him in one of the narrow passages. Giannita, he suffered the soldiers to push me aside, without granting me one word.

"Now, don't you see that God hates me. When I heard you talking about four o'clock yesterday afternoon, I became frightened. The Christchild brings me fresh misfortunes, I thought. It hates me, who has betrayed my father."

When she had said this, she was silent at last, listening breathlessly to what Giannita would say. And Giannita related to her her history.

"Lo, is it not strange," she said finally, "I have not been in Catania for twelve years, and then wholly unexpectedly I am allowed to come here. And I know of nothing at all, but as soon as I set foot on the street here, I learn of your misfortune. God has sent for me, I said to myself. He has called me hither to help my godsister."

Signorina Palmeri's eyes turned anxiously and inquiringly towards her. Now the blow would surely come. She summoned all her courage to meet it.

"What do you wish me to do for you, godsister?" said Giannita. "Do you know of what I was thinking, as I walked on the street? I will ask her if she

will go with me to Diamante. I know an old house at home, where we can live cheaply. And I would sew and embroider for our maintenance. Out there on the street, it seemed to me this could be done, but now I see that it is impossible, impossible. Your claims on life are different, but tell me if there is anything I can do for you. Drive me not away, for God has sent me."

The signorina leaned eagerly towards Giannita. "Well," she said anxiously.

"You must let me do what I can for you, because I love you," said Giannita, gliding down on her knees and putting her arms around her.

"Have you nothing else to say?" asked the signorina.

"I wish that I had," said Giannita, "but I'm only a poor thing."

It was wonderful to see how the features in the young signorina's face now softened, how her complexion brightened, and how her eyes began to beam. It now became evident that she was a great beauty.

"Giannita," she said softly and scarcely audibly, "do you believe that it is a miracle? Do you believe that God would let miracles happen for my sake?"

"Yes, yes," whispered Giannita.

"I begged the Christchild to help me, and he sends me you. Do you think it was the Christchild, that sent you, Giannita?"

"It was, it was."

"God has not forsaken me then, Giannita?"

"No, God has not forsaken you." The godsister sat and wept a while. It was very still in the room. "When you came, Giannita, it seemed that nothing

remained for me but to kill myself," she said. "I knew not where to go, and God hated me."

"But tell me what I can do for you, godsister?" said Giannita.

In answer the other drew her up close and kissed her.

"It is sufficient that you are sent by the little Christchild," she said. "It is enough that I know that God has not forsaken me."

IV

DIAMANTE.

MICAELA PALMERI went to Diamante in company with Giannita. They had sat down in the mail-stage at three o'clock in the morning, and had traveled along the beautiful road encircling the lower slope of Etna. But it had been quite dark. They had seen nothing of the surrounding country.

The young signorina, however, did not complain of this. She sat with closed eyes, absorbed in her great grief. Even when it began to grow light, she would not lift her eyes to look out. Not before they were quite near Diamante could Giannita persuade her to gaze at the landscape.

"Now look! That is Diamante, your future home," she said.

Micaela Palmeri had then beheld the mighty Etna, which hid a large portion of the sky. Directly behind the mountain the sun rose, and when the upper edge of its disk peeped forth it looked as if the whole mountain top was on fire and sent out sparks and rays. But Giannita exhorted her to look towards the other side.

And there she saw the whole jagged mountain range, which surrounds Etna like a turreted wall, stand blushing in the sunrise.

But Giannita pointed in another direction. It was not that she wanted her to see, not that.

Then she lowered her eyes and looked down into a black valley where the ground gleamed like velvet, and the white Simeto dashed forth down at the bottom of the glen.

Still she did not turn her eyes in the right direction.

Then at last she saw the steep Monte Chiaro rising from the black valley, bright red in the morning light and surrounded by palm trees. And at the top she had seen a city, turreted and walled, and with all its windows and weather-vanes aglow with light. At the sight of which she had seized Giannita's arm, and asked her if that was a real city, and if people lived there.

She thought it was one of the heavenly cities, and that it would disappear like a vision. She felt certain that no human being had yet wandered along the road which ran zig-zag up the mountain, and disappeared within the dark city gate.

But as she approached nearer to Diamante, and saw that it was real and earthly, tears rose in her eyes. That to her the earth still seemed beautiful touched her. She had believed that after it had been the scene of all her misfortunes, she would always find it hoary and faded, and strewn with thistles and poisonous flowers.

She rode into the impoverished Diamante with folded hands, as though it were a shrine she was approaching. And it seemed to her that this city could offer her not beauty only, but also happiness.

V

DON FERRANTE.

A FEW days later Gaetano stood in his workshop carving grape leaves on rosary beads. It was Sunday, but Gaetano felt no twinge of conscience because he was working, for was it not work to the glory of God?

A feeling of anguish and unrest had taken possession of him. It had occurred to him, that the peaceful time he had been permitted to spend with Donna Elisa must now be nearing its end. And he felt that he would soon be driven out into the world.

For in Sicily great need prevailed, and he saw distress wandering like a pestilence from city to city and from home to home, and it had come to Diamante also.

Therefore no one ever came into Donna Elisa's shop to buy anything now. The little images of saints which Gaetano carved stood in long rows on the shelves, and the rosaries hung in great clusters under the desk. And Donna Elisa was in great need and trouble because she could not earn anything.

This was a sign to Gaetano, that he must leave Diamante, go out into the world, emigrate, if need be. For to carve images which never were worshiped, and to turn rosary beads which never glided between the fingers of a worshiper could not be working to God's glory.

It seemed to him as if somewhere in the world there must be a beautiful newly built temple, the walls of which were erected, but as yet stood bare and naked inside. It waited and hoped that Gaetano would come and carve chairs for the chancel and altar-railing and pulpit and bookstand and shrine. And his heart longed and pined for this work.

But that cathedral was not to be found in Sicily, for there one never thought of building a new church. It must be far away in countries such as Florida, or Argentine, where the earth is not yet filled with sacred buildings. He both rejoiced and trembled, and had commenced to work with redoubled zeal in order that Donna Elisa might have something to sell while he was away earning a fortune for her.

He now waited for yet another sign from God before deciding to go. And that was that he should have power to speak of his longing to Donna Elisa. He felt that it would grieve Donna Elisa deeply, and he hardly knew how he should be able to mention it.

While he stood thinking of this, Donna Elisa entered the workshop. Then he said to himself, that to-day he could not think of telling her, for to-day Donna Elisa was happy. Her tongue ran on, and her face beamed.

Gaetano asked himself when he last had seen her so. Ever since distress had come upon them it had been like living without sunshine in one of Etna's caves.

Why had not Gaetano been up in the market and

heard the music? asked Don Elisa. Why did he never come to hear and see her brother, Don Ferrante? Gaetano who only saw him when he stood in the shop dressed in stocking-cap and short jacket, did not know what sort of a man he was. He thought him an ugly old merchant, with a wrinkled face and rough beard. No one knew Don Ferrante, who had not seen him on Sunday, conducting the music.

To-day he had worn a new uniform. He had a three-cornered hat with green and white plumes, silver on the collar, silver braiding on the breast, and a sword at the side. And when he ascended the conductor's platform, the wrinkles had disappeared from his face, his figure had grown. He could almost have been called handsome.

When he conducted the Cavalleria, one dared hardly breathe. The great houses by the market-place had sung too. What did Gaetano think of that! Donna Elisa had plainly heard a love song issuing from the Palazzo Geraci, and from the desolate nunnery a beautiful hymn had rolled out over the market.

And when there had been a pause in the music, the handsome advocate Favara, who was dressed in black velvet coat, a large slouched hat, and a bright red necktie, had come forward to Don Ferrante, and, pointing towards the open side of the market from where you could see Etna and the sea, said, "Don Ferrante, like Etna you lift us to the sky, and enrapture us like the infinite sea."

Had Gaetano seen Don Ferrante to-day he would have loved him. He would at least have been

obliged to admit that he was stately. When he laid the baton aside for a while, took the advocate's arm and walked back and forth with him on the smooth stones between the Roman portal and palazzo Geraci, it was clearly evident that he could well vie with the handsome Favara.

Donna Elisa had been sitting on the stone bench under the cathedral, together with the Syndic's wife. And Signora Voltaro had said quite suddenly, after having watched Don Ferrante a while: "Donna Elisa, your brother is still a young man. He may marry yet, in spite of his fifty years."

And she, Donna Elisa, had replied that she prayed heaven daily for this.

But hardly had she said it when a lady, dressed in mourning, entered the market-place. A blacker object one had never seen. Not only were her dress and hat and gloves black, but her veil was so thick that it was difficult to believe that there was a white face behind it.

Santissima Dio, it was as if she had hung over herself a pall. And she had walked slowly and bent. One had almost felt frightened. One had almost believed it was a ghost.

Ah, yes, the whole market-place had been so full of merriment. The peasants, home over Sunday, had stood about in groups in holiday attire, with red shawls thrown around the neck. The peasant women, going to the cathedral, had glided by, dressed in green skirts and yellow scarfs. A couple of tourists had stood by the balustrade, watching Etna, and they had been dressed in white. And all the uniformed musicians who had been almost as fine as

Don Ferrante, and the shining instruments, and the image-decked façade of the dome! And the sunshine and Mongibello's snowy crown, which to-day had seemed so near that one could almost touch it, all had been unparalleled in gaiety.

Now when the poor lady in black had arrived in the midst of all this, everybody had stared at her, and some had made the sign of the cross. And the children had rushed down from the courthouse steps, where they had been riding on the railing, and followed at a short distance. And even the lazy Piero who had been lying on the edge of the balustrade, had raised himself on his elbow. The excitement could not have been greater had the black Madonna from the dome come walking along.

But had it occurred to any one that it was a pity to stare so at her? Had any one felt sorry to see her walk so slowly and so bent.

Yes, one had been touched, and that was Don Ferrante. He had music in his heart, he was a kind man and he thought: "Cursed be these funds which are raised for the needy, and which only bring people into trouble. Is not this the poor Signorina Palmeri, whose father has stolen from a charity fund, and who now dares not show her face for shame?" And immediately Don Ferrante went over to the black lady and intercepted her just outside the church door.

There he had saluted her and mentioned his name. "If I am not greatly mistaken," Don Ferrante had said, "then you are Signorina Palmeri. I have a request to make."

Whereupon she had started and stepped backward as if to flee, yet had remained standing.

"It is about my sister Donna Elisa," he had said. "She knew your mother, signorina, and she is very anxious to make your acquaintance. She is sitting here near the cathedral. Let me conduct you to her."

And without more ado, Don Ferrante had placed her arm on his and led her to Donna Elisa. And she made no resistance. Donna Elisa would have liked to see the one who, to-day, could have withstood Don Ferrante.

But Donna Elisa had then risen and gone to meet the lady in black, and thrown back her veil. And she had kissed her on both cheeks.

But what a face, what a face! Maybe it was not at all beautiful, but it had eyes that spoke for themselves, and that mourned and wept, even when the whole face smiled. Gaetano would not perhaps want to carve or paint a Madonna from that face, for it was too thin and too pale, but surely the Lord knew what He was about when he did not place those eyes in a face that was rosy and plump.

When Donna Elisa kissed her, she had laid her head on her shoulder, and a few short sobs had shaken her, and then looked up with a smile. It was as if the smile had said: "Ah, is the world like this? Is it so beautiful? Let me look and smile at it! May a poor unfortunate like myself really dare to look at it and be seen?"

All this she had said without words, with a smile only. Such a face, such a face!

Here Gaetano interrupted Donna Elisa. "Where is she now?" he said. "I too must see her."

Then Donna Elisa looked Gaetano straight in the

eyes. And they were burning bright as though filled with fire, and a deep flush mounted to his temples.

" You will see her betimes," she said harshly. And she regretted every word she had spoken.

Gaetano saw that she was afraid, and understood what she feared. And just then it flashed upon him to tell her that he was going away, far away to America.

And it now became clear to him that this strange signorina must be very dangerous. Donna Elisa was so sure that Gaetano would have fallen in love with her, that she almost felt glad to hear that he intended to go away.

For everything else seemed better to her, than a poor daughter-in-law whose father was a thief.

VI

DON MATTEO'S MISSION

THERE came an afternoon when the rector, Don Matteo, slipped his feet into newly polished shoes, donned a newly brushed soutan, and arranged his cloak into graceful folds. His face beamed as he walked up the alley, and when he administered blessings upon the old women spinning at the doorposts, it was with motions so soft, as though it were roses he was distributing.

The alley through which Don Matteo passed was spanned by at least seven arches, as if every other house wished to unite itself with its neighbor. It ran narrow and crooked down the mountain, half staircase and half street. There was always an overflow in the gutter, and there lay always plenty of cabbage leaves and orange peel to slip on. The wash clothes hung on lines all the way from the earth to the sky. Wet sleeves and apron-strings were blown by the wind right into Don Matteo's face, and it felt disagreeable and uncanny, as if Don Matteo had been caressed by a corpse.

At the end of the alley was a small, dark court, and there Don Matteo saw an old house, before which he stopped. It was large and square, and almost wholly without windows. It had two large outside staircases with immense steps, and two large doors with pon-

derous locks. It had walls of lava, and a loggia where the green slime grew over the brick floor and where the cobwebs were so thick, that the lithe lizards came near being caught in them.

Don Matteo lifted the knocker and struck vigorously. And immediately the women along the whole alley began to talk and question.

The women washing at the market-place cistern dropped their washing stones and batlets, and began to whisper and ask: "On what errand is Don Matteo out now?" They said, "Why is Don Matteo knocking at the portal of an old house that is haunted, and where no one dares to live except the strange signorina, whose father is in prison?"

But Giannita now opened and admitted Don Matteo, conducting him through a long corridor which smelt mouldy and damp. In several places the tiles had loosened, and Don Matteo could look straight down into the cellar, where swarms of rats ran across the black mud floor.

In wandering through the old house, Don Matteo's good humor left him. He did not pass a staircase without peering suspiciously up the same, and the least rustle startled him. He became low-spirited, as though he foresaw some calamity. Don Matteo remembered the little turbaned Moor who used to live in this house, and although he did not see him, it might nevertheless be said that he was conscious of him in one way or another.

Finally Giannita opened a door and ushered the rector into a room. There the walls were naked as in a barn, the bed was as thin as a nun's, and above it hung a Madonna, that was not worth more than

three soldi. The rector stood staring at the little Madonna, till he felt the tears rise in his eyes.

While he stood thus Signorina Palmeri came into the room. Her head was bowed and she walked slowly, as though she were wounded. When the rector saw her, it seemed as if he wished to say: "You and I, Signorina Palmeri, have met in a strange old house. Are you here for the purpose of studying the Moorish inscriptions or to seek mosaics in the old cellars?" For the rector felt perplexed when he saw Signorina Palmeri. He could not understand that this noble lady was poor. He could not conceive that she lived in the little Moor's house.

He said to himself that he must rescue her from the haunted house and from poverty. He prayed the gracious Madonna for power to save her.

Thereupon he told the signorina that he was sent to her by Don Ferrante Alagona. Don Ferrante had confided in him that she had declined his offer of marriage. Why? Didn't she know that although Don Ferrante appeared to be poor, standing there in his shop, he was nevertheless the richest man in Diamante. Besides Don Ferrante was of ancient Spanish stock, which had been highly respected, both at home and in Sicily. And he still owned the large house by the Corso which had belonged to his ancestors.

While Don Matteo was speaking, he saw how the signorina's face grew rigid and pale. He almost feared to speak plainly, for fear that she would faint.

It was only with the greatest effort that she was able to answer him. The words would not pass over her lips. It was as if they were too detestable to

utter. "She could very well understand," she said, "that Don Ferrante wished to know why she had declined his offer. She had felt touched and infinitely grateful for it, but she could not be his wife. She could not marry because she brought with her as a marriage portion only dishonor and disgrace."

"If you marry an Alagona, dear signorina," said Don Matteo, "you need not fear to be asked of what family you yourself are. That is a glorious old race. Don Ferrante and his sister are still counted as the first in Diamante, although they have lost all the family estates, and must carry on trade. Don Ferrante knows well that the luster of the old name would not be dulled by a marriage with you. Do not hesitate on that account, signorina, if otherwise you have nothing against marrying Don Ferrante."

But Signorina Palmeri repeated what she had said. Don Ferrante ought not to marry the daughter of a criminal. She sat there pale and despairing and, as it seemed, wanted to train herself to say these terrible words. She spoke of not wishing to obtrude herself upon a family who would despise her. She succeeded in repeating this, coldly and harshly, in a voice that did not tremble.

But the more she spoke the stronger became Don Matteo's desire to help her. It was as if he had met a queen who had been divested of her throne. And he was seized with a burning desire to place the crown again on her head, and fasten the mantle on her shoulder.

Therefore Don Matteo asked her if her father would not soon come out of prison, and wondered what he would live upon.

The signorina answered that he would live upon her work.

Don Matteo inquired very seriously if she had asked herself how her father, who had always been a rich man, would be able to bear poverty.

Now she was silent. She tried to move her lips and answer, but she was unable to utter a sound.

Don Matteo talked and talked. She looked more and more frightened, but she would not yield.

At last he hardly knew what to do. How should he save her from the haunted house, from poverty and from the shame which oppressed her? At that moment his eyes fell upon the little image of the Madonna above the bed. The young signorina was consequently a believer.

Inspiration from above then descended upon Don Matteo. He felt that God had sent him to save this poor woman. When he again spoke, there was a ring in his voice, which was strange to him. He understood that it was by no means he alone that spoke.

"My daughter," he said, rising, "you shall marry Don Ferrante for your father's sake. The Madonna wishes it, my daughter."

There was something imposing in Don Matteo's manner. No one had ever seen him like that before. The signorina trembled, as if the voice of a spirit had spoken to her, and she folded her hands.

"Be a good and faithful wife to Don Ferrante," said Don Matteo, "and the Madonna promises you, through me, that your father shall have a peaceful old age."

Then the signorina perceived that it was inspiration that guided Don Matteo. It was God that

spoke through him. And she dropped on her knees and bowed her head. "I will do what you command," she said.

. . . . . .

But when the rector, Don Matteo, came out of the little Moor's house, and walked up the alley, he suddenly took out his breviary and commenced to read. And although the wet clothes flapped against his cheeks, and orange peel and small children lay in ambush for him, he looked only in his book. He needed to hear God's great words.

Because inside the black house he had felt so confident, so sure; but when he came out into the sunshine, the promise he had given in the name of the Madonna began to trouble him.

Don Matteo prayed and read and read and prayed. May the great God protect the woman who had believed in him and obeyed him as though he had been a prophet!

Don Matteo turned the corner by the Corso. He knocked against mules with traveling signorinas on their backs, he went right against peasants coming home from work, and he pushed the old spinstresses and tangled their flax. Finally he reached a small, dark shop. It had no windows and occupied a corner of the old palace. The threshold was about a foot high, the floor was of mud, the door had always to be left open to admit the light. The counter was besieged by wagoners and ass-drivers.

And inside the counter stood Don Ferrante. His beard was matted, his face was one wrinkle, his voice hissing in anger. The wagoners asked an exorbitant price for the loads they had driven up from Catania.

VII

THE BELLS OF SAN PASQUALE

ONE soon noticed in Diamante that Don Ferrante's wife, Donna Micaela, was nothing but a child. No matter how much she might look like a woman of the world, she was nevertheless only a child. And more could not be expected after the life she had led.

Of the world she had seen nothing but its theaters, museums, ball-rooms, promenades, racing grounds. She had never been allowed to go out on the street alone. She had never worked. No one had ever talked seriously with her. She had not even been in love.

When she had moved into the summer palace, she forgot her sorrows as easily and quickly as a child would have done. And it was apparent that she had a child's playful disposition, and that she could remodel and transform everything around her. The old filthy Saracen city of Diamante seemed a paradise to Donna Micaela. She said that she had not felt at all surprised when Don Ferrante had spoken to her at the market-place and when he had proposed to her. It seemed to her perfectly natural that such things should happen in Diamante. She had seen immediately that Diamante was a city, where rich men went about seeking after poor, unfortunate

signorinas in order to make them mistresses of their black lava palaces.

She liked the summer palace too. The faded, century-old muslin, which covered the furniture told her stories. And she found a deep meaning in all the love scenes enacted between the shepherds and shepherdesses on the wall panels.

Also the mystery regarding Don Ferrante she had found out directly. He was by no means a common shopkeeper on the street of a country town. He was an ambitious man, who saved money in order that he might buy back the family estates on Etna, and the palace at Catania, and the castles on the inland mountains. And if he went about in short jacket and bag-cap, it was that he might all the sooner appear as grandee of Spain and prince of Sicily.

After they were married, Don Ferrante would every evening throw over himself a velvet coat, take the guitar under his arm and, placing himself on the gallery-steps leading to the music-room in the summer palace, would sing canzonets. While he sang, Donna Micaela dreamed that she was married to the noblest man on the beautiful Isle of Sicily.

When Donna Micaela had been married a couple of months, her father came out of prison and settled down in the summer palace with his daughter. He was well pleased with Diamante and made friends with everybody. He found pleasure in conversing with bee-keepers and vineyard laborers, whom he met at Café Europa, and he amused himself every day by riding about on the slope of Etna seeking archæological remains.

But he had by no means forgiven his daughter. He lived under her roof, to be sure, but he treated her as a stranger, and was never affectionate towards her. Donna Micaela left him alone, and took no notice of it. She could no longer take his anger so seriously to heart. This old man, whom she loved, imagined that he could continue hating her year after year! That he could live near her, hear her speak, see her eyes, and be surrounded by her love and still keep on hating her! Ah, he knew neither her nor himself! He used to sit and dream of how it would be when he must confess that he was conquered, when he must come and show her that he loved her.

One day Donna Micaela stood on the balcony waving her hand to her father, who rode away on a little dark brown pony, when Don Ferrante came up from the shop to speak to her. And what Don Ferrante wished to say was this, that he had succeeded in gaining admittance for her father to "The Brotherhood of the Holy Heart," in Catania.

But although Don Ferrante spoke very plainly, Donna Micaela seemed not to understand him.

He had to repeat to her that yesterday he had been in Catania and procured an admittance for Cavaliere Palmeri to a brotherhood. He could enter there in a month.

She only asked: "What does this mean? What does this mean?"

"Oh," said Don Ferrante, "I'm tired of buying your father expensive wines from the mainland, and I myself would sometimes like to ride Domenico."

When he had said this, he wanted to go. There was nothing further to be said.

"But first tell me what sort of brotherhood this is?" she said.—"What it is! A lot of old men live there."—"Poor old men?" "Well, yes, not exactly rich."—"I suppose they have not rooms by themselves?"—"No, but very large dormitories."—"And eat out of tin bowls at unlaid tables?"—"No, they are porcelain."—"But without tablecloth?"—"Well, what of that, if only the table is clean!"

To quiet her he added: "Many excellent people live there. If you care to know, it was not without hesitation that Cavaliere Palmeri was received."

With that Don Ferrante went. His wife felt grieved, but also very angry. She thought he had robbed himself of dignity and rank and become a common small shopkeeper.

She said quite loud, although no one heard her, that the summer palace was only a big, ugly old house and Diamante a poor and miserable city.

And of course she would not allow her father to move. Don Ferrante should see.

When they had eaten dinner, Don Ferrante wanted to go to Café Europa and play dominoes, and he looked for his hat. Donna Micaela took his hat and followed him out on the gallery running round the house. When they were far enough away from the dining-room so that her father could not hear them she said impetuously:

"Have you anything against my father?"—"He costs too much."—"But you are rich."—"Who has put that into your head? Don't you see how I must toil?"—"Let us rather restrict ourselves in something else."—"Yes, I shall put a limit to something. Giannita has had gifts enough."—"No, restrict me

in something."—"You, you are my wife, no changes shall be made regarding you."

She was silent a moment. She reflected what she should say to frighten him.

"Do you know why I am your wife?"—"Oh yes."—"Do you also know what the rector promised me?"—"That's the rector's business, but I do what I can."—"You have perhaps heard that I broke with all my friends in Catania, when I heard that my father had sought their aid and had been refused."—"Yes, I know."—"And that I came here to Diamante, that he might be spared seeing them?"—"They won't come to the brotherhood."—"When you know all this, are you not afraid to do anything against my father?"—"Afraid? No, I'm not afraid of my wife."

"Have I not made you happy?" she asked—"O, yes," he answered indifferently.—"Have you not liked to sing to me? Has it not pleased you that I have considered you the most magnanimous man in Sicily. Hasn't it pleased you that I have felt at home in the old summer palace? Why should all this end?"

He laid his hand on her shoulder and warned her. "Bear in mind that you are not married to a fine gentleman from Via Etnea!"—"Oh, no."—"The customs are different up here on the mountain. Here wives obey their husbands. And we care nothing for fine words."

When he talked like that, she became frightened. The next moment she was on her knees before him. The night was dark, but enough light streamed out through the windows of the illumined rooms to

enable him to see her eyes. Glorious as stars, they were fixed upon him in fervent prayer.

"Be merciful! You know how I love him!" Don Ferrante laughed. "You should have commenced with that. Now you've got me angry." She continued to kneel perfectly still, looking up at him.—"It's well," he said, "that next time you know how to behave." She still remained on her knees. Then he asked her: "Shall I or you tell him?"

Donna Micaela felt ashamed that she had humiliated herself. She rose and answered authoritatively: "I will tell him, but not before the last day. And you must not let him notice anything."

"No, that I won't," he said, mimicking her. "A short wailing pleases me best."

But when he was gone, Donna Micaela laughed at Don Ferrante, because he imagined that he could do with her father as he pleased. She knew well enough who would help her.

. . . . . .

In the cathedral at Diamante is a miracle-working Madonna image, and this is its history.

A long, long time ago there lived in a cave in Monte Chiaro a holy hermit. One night this hermit dreamed that in the harbor of Catania lay a ship laden with images of saints, and among these was one, so sacred, that the Englishmen, who are richer than all others, would have given for it its weight in gold. As soon as the hermit awoke from his dream, he went to Catania. When he came there he saw that his dream was true. In the harbor lay a ship laden with images of saints, and among them was one of the holy Madonna, which was holier than all

the others. The hermit now begged the captain not to take this image away from Sicily, but give it to him. The captain, however, refused. "I will bring it to England," he said, and the Englishmen will give me its weight in gold for it. The hermit renewed his entreaties. At last the captain let his men drive him away and hoisted sails, ready to depart.

It looked as if the holy image would be lost to Sicily, but the hermit fell on his knees by one of the lava blocks on the shore and prayed to God that this might not take place. And what happened? The ship could not start. The anchor was up, the sails hoisted, and the wind was favorable, but for three whole days the ship lay motionless, as though it had been a rock. On the third day the captain took the Madonna image and tossed it to the hermit, who still lay on the shore. And immediately the ship started out to sea. But the hermit brought the image to Monte Chiaro, and it is still in Diamante, where it has a chapel and an altar in the dome.

Donna Micaela now went to this Madonna image to pray for her father.

She found the Madonna's chapel, which was built in a dark corner of the cathedral. There the walls were entirely covered with votive articles, with silver hearts and pictures, all of which were gifts from those whom Diamante's Madonna had helped.

The image was hewn in black marble, and when Donna Micaela saw it standing there in its niche, tall and dark and almost hidden by a golden lattice, it seemed to her that its face was beautiful, and that

it beamed with tenderness. And her heart was filled with hope. Here was heaven's mighty queen, here was the good Mother Mary, here was the afflicted one, who understood all distress, and she would not suffer her father to be taken away from her.

Here she would immediately find succor. She need only fall on her knees and tell her sorrows and the black Madonna would help her.

While she prayed, she felt certain that Don Ferrante already at this very moment changed his opinion. When she came home, he would come to meet her and tell her that she could keep her father.

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It was a morning three weeks later.

Donna Micaela came out of the summer palace to go to morning mass, but before going to the church she went into Donna Elisa's shop to buy a wax candle. It was still so early that she feared the shop would not be open, but it was, and she felt glad to be able to bring with her a gift to the black Madonna.

The shop was vacant when Donna Micaela entered, and she pushed the door back and forth that the bell might jingle and summon Donna Elisa. At last some one came, it was not Donna Elisa, however, but a young man.

The young man was Gaetano, whom Donna Micaela knew but slightly. For Gaetano had heard so much about her, that he was afraid of meeting her, and every time she had come over to Donna Elisa, he had locked himself in his workshop. Donna Micaela knew nothing more about him than that he intended to leave Diamante, and that he was constantly carv-

ing holy images, that Donna Elisa might have something to sell at home, while he earned great riches far away in Argentine.

When she now saw Gaetano, she thought him so handsome that it gave her pleasure to look at him. She was then in great trouble and as restless as a hunted animal, but no sorrow in the world could hinder her from experiencing pleasure as soon as she saw something beautiful.

She asked herself where she had seen him before, and she remembered that she had seen his face in her father's splendid collection of paintings in the palace at Catania. There he had not been in working-man's blouse, but had worn a black felt hat with long, swaying plumes, and a broad lace collar over the velvet coat. And he had been painted by the great master Van Dyck.

Donna Micaela asked Gaetano for a wax candle, and he began to look for one. And now the queerest thing happened; Gaetano, who saw the little shop daily, seemed to be wholly unfamiliar with it. He sought the candles in the rosary drawer and in the small medal cases. He found none, and he grew so impatient, that he upset boxes and drawers and broke images. Everywhere was ruin and confusion. And it would be a real vexation to Donna Elisa when she came home.

But Donna Micaela enjoyed seeing how he shook the luxuriant hair from off his face and how the yellowish-brown eyes gleamed like yellow wine when the sunshine strikes it. She found comfort in gazing at one so beautiful.

And Donna Micaela apologized to the noble gen-

tlemen, whom the great Van Dyck had painted. Because she had often said to them: "Ah, signor, you've been beautiful, but so dark and so pale and so sad, you could not have been. And you have not had such flashing eyes. This the master has added, that painted you." But when Donna Micaela saw Gaetano, she found that a face could have all this, and that the master had no need of adding anything. Therefore she apologized to the noble gentlemen.

Meanwhile Gaetano had found the long candle-boxes which stood under the desk in the same place where they had always stood. And he gave her the candle, but he did not know what it cost, and said that she might come in and pay for it later. When she asked for something to wrap around it he was in such a state of anxiety that she was obliged to help him search.

It troubled her that such a man should think of going to Argentine.

He let Donna Micaela wrap up the candle herself and stood watching her meanwhile. She wished she had been able to tell him not to look at her now, when her face reflected only hopelessness and misery.

Gaetano had not examined her features more than a moment when he sprang up on a small step-ladder, took down an image from the top shelf, and came towards her with it. It was a small gilded and painted wooden angel, a little San Michele in strife with the arch-enemy, which he drew forth out of paper and cotton.

This he handed to Donna Micaela, and begged her

to accept it. He wished to give it to her, he said, because it was the best he had ever carved. He felt so certain that it possessed greater power than his other images, that he had put it away on the highest shelf.

He had charged Donna Elisa to sell it only to some one who had a great sorrow. And now Donna Micaela must take it.

She hesitated. She thought him almost too bold.

Gaetano, however, bade her see how well the image was carved. Did she notice that the archangel's wings were ruffled in anger, and that Lucifero pressed his claw into the iron splint on his leg? Did she see how San Michele ran the spear through Lucifero, and how he scowled and pressed his lips together.

He wanted to place the little image in her hand, but she pushed it away gently. She saw very well that it was beautiful and powerful, she said, but she knew that it could not help her. She thanked him for his gift, but she could not take it.

Gaetano then snatched the image away, rolled it up and put it back in its place.

And not before it was wrapped up and put away did he speak to her.

But then he asked her why she came to buy wax candles, if she was not a believer. Did she mean to say that she did not believe in San Michele? Didn't she know that he was the mightiest among the angels and that it was he who had vanquished Lucifero and pitched him down into Etna? Did she doubt that it was true? Didn't she know that dur-

ing the struggle, San Michele lost a wing-feather and that it was found in Caltanisetta? Did she know it, or didn't she know it? Or what did she mean by saying that San Michele could not help? Was it her belief, then, that no saints could help? And there he stood in his workshop every day, carving images of saints! Would he do that if it were of no use? Did she think he was a deceiver?

But as Donna Micaela was as stanch a believer as Gaetano, she considered his speech unjust, and it roused in her a spirit of opposition.

"Nevertheless, it sometimes happens, that saints cannot help," she said to him. And when she saw that Gaetano looked distrustful she could not resist the strong desire she felt of convicting him, and she said to him, that one had promised her, in the name of the Madonna, that if she became a faithful wife to Don Ferrante her father should enjoy a happy old age. But now her husband wanted to place her father in an asylum, which was as poor as an alms-house, and as strict as a prison. And the Madonna had not averted it; in eight days it would take place.

Gaetano listened to her with profound gravity. It was this which induced her to confide the whole story to him.

"Donna Micaela," he said, "you must go to the black Madonna in the cathedral."

"You believe, then, that I haven't asked her?"

Gaetano blushed, and said almost in anger: "You don't mean to say that you have turned to the black Madonna in vain?"

"I have prayed to her in vain these last three weeks, implored her, implored her."

When Donna Micaela told about this, she could hardly breathe. She wanted to weep over herself, because every day she had expected succor, and every day she had been disappointed, and yet had known no other expedient than to begin her prayers anew.

And one saw on her face that her soul lived through again what she had suffered, as she daily had expected her prayer would be granted, and time had slipped away for her.

But Gaetano was not moved, but stood smiling and drummed on one of the glass boxes standing on the desk.

"Have you only *prayed* to the Madonna?" he said.

Only prayed, only prayed! Why she had promised her to sin no more. She had gone to the alley, where she had first lived, and nursed the sick woman with the ulcer on her leg. She never passed a beggar without giving him something.

Only prayed! And she said to him that if the Madonna had been able to help her, she ought to have been satisfied with her prayers. She had spent most of her time in the cathedral. And the anguish, the anguish, which tortured her. Would not that be counted? He only shrugged his shoulders. Had she tried nothing else?

Nothing else! But there was nothing in the world, which she had not tried. She had given silver hearts and wax candles. She sat constantly at her rosary.

Gaetano irritated her. He would count nothing she had done, and only asked: "Nothing else?" "Nothing else?"

"But you ought to know," she said. "Don Ferrante gives me but very little money. I can do no

more. Now at last I have succeeded in procuring silk and satin for an altar-cloth : " You ought to understand ! "

But Gaetano, who associated with saints every day, and knew how they who compelled God to grant their prayers were carried away with frenzy and enthusiasm, smiled derisively at Donna Micaela, who believed she could compel the Madonna with wax candles and altar-cloths.

He answered her that he understood very well. It was always so with the poor saints. The whole world implored their aid, but few knew how they should act in order to be heard. And afterwards it was said that the saints had no power. All who knew how to pray were helped.

Donna Micaela looked up in lively expectation. There was so much power and conviction in Gaetano's words, that she began to believe that he would teach her the right and saving word.

But Gaetano took the candle, lying before her on the counter, and threw it back into the drawer and told her what she ought to do. He forbade her to give gifts to the Madonna, or to pray to her, or do anything for the poor. He said he would tear her altar-cloth to pieces if she sewed another stitch on it.

" Show her, Donna Micaela, that it really concerns you," and he riveted his penetrating eyes upon her. " Good Heavens, you ought to be able to contrive to do something which will show her that you are in earnest. You ought to be able to show her that without succor you will not live.

" Do you intend to remain faithful to Don Ferrante if he sends your father away ? I suppose you

do. If the Madonna need not fear for what you may come to do, why should she help you?"

Donna Micaela moved backwards. He quickly came out from behind the counter and held her by the sleeve.

"Do you understand? You must show her that you can throw away yourself if aid is denied you, that you can give yourself up to sin and death, if you do not get what you want. It is in that way one compels the saints."

She tore herself away from him and went without a word. She hurried up the winding street, came to the dome, and, greatly frightened, threw herself down before the black Madonna's altar.

This happened on Saturday morning, and on Sunday evening Donna Micaela saw Gaetano again. It was beautiful moonlight, and in Diamante it is customary that on moonlight nights all leave their homes and go out into the street. As soon as the inmates of the summer palace had come outside the door, they had met acquaintances. Donna Elisa had then taken Cavaliere Palmeri's arm, and the Syndic Voltaro had joined Don Ferrante to discuss politics, but Gaetano approached to Donna Micaela, because he wished to hear if she had followed his advice.

"Have you ceased to sew on the altar-cloth?" he said.

But Donna Micaela answered that she had sewed on it all day yesterday.

"Then verily it is you yourself who is ruining your cause, Donna Micaela."

"Yes, that is now beyond assistance, Don Gaetano."

She managed so that they kept at a distance from the others, because there was something she wanted to tell him. And when they came to Porta Etnea, she passed out through the gate, and they followed the paths which steal along under the palm-groves of Monte Chiaro.

They could not have walked on the crowded street. Donna Micaela's speech was such that the people of Diamante would have stoned her had they heard her.

She asked Gaetano if he had ever seen the black Madonna in the cathedral. She had not seen her before yesterday. Perhaps the Madonna had placed herself in such a dark corner of the dome in order that no one might see her. Why, she was black and had a black lattice in front of her. No one could see her.

But to-day Donna Micaela had seen her. To-day the Madonna had had a festival, and she had been taken down from the niche. The floor and walls in her chapel had been decorated with white almond flowers, and she herself had stood on the altar, dark and tall amid this display of flowers.

But when Donna Micaela saw the image, she fell into despair. For that image represented no Madonna. No, the one she had prayed to was no Madonna! O, what a shame! It was only an old goddess. He who had seen anything could not make a mistake in this. She had no crown, but a helmet; she had no child on her arm, but a shield. It was Pallas Athene. It was no Madonna. O, no!

To think that one here in Diamante should worship such an image. To think that one here should set up such a blasphemy and worship it! Did he

know what the worst misfortune was? Their Madonna was so ugly. She was mouldering, and she had never been a work of art. She was so ill-looking, that one could not bear to look at her.

To have been fooled by all the thousand votive things hanging in the chapel, to have been fooled by all the legends told about her! To have wasted three weeks in praying to her! Now see, why she hadn't been succored! It was no Madonna, it was no Madonna.

They walked along the road which runs round Monte Chiaro below the city wall. The whole world around them was white. White mist enwreathed the foot of the mountain, and the almond-trees over there on Etna were perfectly white. Now and then they themselves passed under an almond-tree whose glittering branches were so full of blossoms that they appeared to have been dipped in a bath of silver. The moonlight was so intense, that every thing was deprived of its color, and became white. One might almost wonder that one could not feel it, that it gave no heat, that the eyes were not dazzled.

Donna Micaela wondered if it was the moonlight, which subdued Gaetano, so that he did not seize her and throw her down into Simeto, when she blasphemed the black Madonna.

He walked calmly and silently by her side, but she was afraid of what he might do. Yet in spite of her fear she could not persuade herself to keep silent.

What still remained to be told was most terrible. She said that the whole day she had tried to think of the real Madonna and had recalled all the images of

her, which she knew. But it had all been in vain, because as soon as she thought of heaven's radiant queen, the old black goddess came and placed herself between. And she saw her coming like a dried up and officious old maid obscuring the great queen of heaven, so that for her there was now no longer any Madonna. She believed that the holy Mother was angry with her because she had done too much for the other one, and that she hid her countenance and grace from her. But on account of the false Madonna, misfortune would now fall upon her father. Now she would no longer be allowed to keep him in her home. Now she would never gain his forgiveness. O God, O God!

And all this she repeated to Gaetano, who honored the black Madonna of Diamante more than anything else.

He now came quite close to Donna Micaela, and she feared that it was her last moment. She said in a feeble voice, as if to justify herself: "I am insane. This anguish makes me insane. I never sleep."

But Gaetano had walked quietly beside her, thinking only of what a child she was, and how wholly ignorant she was of how to get on in life.

He was hardly aware of it himself, before he had drawn her, gently, close up to him and kissed her, because she was such a lost, helpless child.

She was so wonderstruck that it did not occur to her to get away. And she neither screamed nor fled. She understood immediately that he kissed her as one kisses a child. She only walked on faster and then began to cry. Just this kiss had made her feel how powerless and forsaken she was, and how she

longed for someone who was kind and strong to take care of her.

It was terrible to think that although she had both father and husband, she should feel so forsaken, that this stranger should need to feel compassion for her.

When Gaetano saw how her figure trembled with suppressed sobs, he too began to quiver.

A strong, passionate feeling took possession of him.

Again he came close to her and laid his hand on her arm. And when he spoke, his voice was not clear and distinct, but coarse and stifled with emotion.

"Will you fly with me to Argentine if the Madonna does not help you?"

Now Donna Micaela shook him off. She felt at once that he no longer spoke to her as to a child. She turned and went back to the city. Gaetano did not follow her, but remained standing on the road, where he had kissed her, and it seemed as though he never more could leave this spot.

For two days Gaetano dreamed about Donna Micaela, but on the third he came over to the summer palace to speak with her.

He met her on the roof terrace, and he told her immediately that she must fly with him.

He had thought of it ever since they had parted. He had stood in his shop brooding over all that had happened, and now everything was clear to him.

She was a rose, which the powerful sirocco had torn from its twig and rudely whirled away through the air, that she might find all the better rest and protection near a heart that loved her. She ought

to understand that God and all the saints wished and demanded that they should love each other, else those great misfortunes had not brought her to him. And if the Madonna refused to help her, then it was because she wished to release her from her promise of fidelity to Don Ferrante. For all the heavenly ones knew that she was his, Gaetano's. For him she was created, for him she had grown up, for him she lived. When he had kissed her on the road in the moonlight, he had been like a lost child, that long had roamed in the wilderness, and now had come at last to home's portal. He possessed nothing. But she was his home and his hearth, she was the inheritance God had intended for him, the only thing in the world that was his.

Therefore he would not leave her behind. She must go with him, she must, she must.

He did not fall on his knees before her. He stood talking to her with clenched hands and flashing eyes. He did not beg her, he commanded her to accompany him, because she was his.

It was no sin to carry her away, but rather his duty to do so.

Donna Micaela listened to him without making a movement. She was silent for some time, even after he had ceased speaking.

"When are you going?" she asked at length.

"I leave Diamante next Saturday."

"And when does the steamer go?"

"Sunday night from Messina."

Donna Micaela rose and went over towards the terrace steps.

"My father goes to Catania on Saturday," she

said. "I shall ask Don Ferrante, to allow me to accompany him there."

She descended a few steps, as if she intended to say no more. Then she stopped. "If you meet me in Catania then, I will follow you wherever you wish."

She hurried down the stairs. Gaetano did not try to detain her. A time would come when she would not flee from him. He knew she could not help loving him.

Donna Micaela had passed all Friday afternoon in the cathedral. She had come to the Madonna and prostrated herself before her in despair. "O, Madonna mia, Madonna mia! Shall I to-morrow be a runaway wife? Will the people have a right to speak all manner of ill of me?" And then everything seemed to her equally terrible. She was terrified at the thought of fleeing with Gaetano, and she did not know how she could remain with Don Ferrante. She hated them both. Neither of them, it seemed, could offer her anything but misery.

She saw well enough that the Madonna could not help her. And now she finally asked herself if it would not be greater misery to flee with Gaetano than to remain with Don Ferrante. Was it worth the trouble, that she ruined herself for the sake of wreaking vengeance on her husband?

And could there be anything more detestable than to run away with a man whom she did not love?

She writhed in pain. The whole week she was harassed by a consuming anxiety. The worst thing was, that she never could sleep. Her thoughts were no longer clear and sane.

Again and again she began her prayers anew. But

then she thought: "The Madonna cannot help me." And immediately she ceased praying.

Then she happened to think of past sorrows and she remembered the little image which had helped her when she had been in equally great despair.

She turned with enthusiastic zeal to the poverty-stricken, little child. "Help me, help me! Help my aged father, and help me that I be not tempted to wickedness and revenge!"

When she retired that night, she still continued to struggle and feel distressed. "If I only could sleep one hour," she said, "I should know what I wanted."

Gaetano was to start early the following morning. She finally made up her mind to speak with him before he went, and tell him that she could not accompany him. She could not bear to be considered a fallen woman.

No sooner had she decided this, than she fell asleep. She did not wake until the clock struck nine the next morning. And then Gaetano had already gone. She could not tell him that she repented.

But she did not think of that either. While she slept something new and strange had come over her. It seemed to her that during the night she had lived in heaven and inhaled bliss.

. . . . .

Who of the saints is of greater benefit to the people than San Pasquale? Does it not sometimes happen that they stand talking in some lonely place in the woods or fields, and that they are either talking ill of someone or planning something foolish. Well, just as they are talking and talking they suddenly hear a rustle near by, causing them to turn round and

wonder if anyone threw a stone at them. It's of no use to look around, or to run and seek for the one who threw the stone. For that stone came from San Pasquale. As surely as there is justice in heaven, it was San Pasquale who, hearing them talk about something wicked, threw one of his stones to warn them.

And he who does not like to be disturbed when he is planning wickedness, must not console himself by thinking that San Pasquale's stones will soon be gone. They will certainly never give out. They are so numerous, that they will last to the end of time. For when San Pasquale walked here on earth, do you know what he did? Do you know what he was thinking of most of all?

San Pasquale noticed all the little flint-stones lying in his path and gathered them up in his bag. You, signor, you will hardly stoop to pick up a soldo, but San Pasquale picked up every little flint-stone, and when he died, he took them all with him up to heaven, and there he now sits throwing them at all who are about to do something foolish.

But this is by no means the only good San Pasquale does mankind. It is also he who gives signs if anyone is going to be married, or if anyone is going to die, and he can make signs in other ways too. Old mother Saradda in Randazzo sat by her daughter's sick-bed one night and fell asleep. But the daughter lay unconscious and was near death, and no one could notify the priest. How then was the mother awakened in time? How was she awakened so that she could send her husband to the rectory? Simply by a chair that began to rock back and forth and creak and

crack till she woke. And it was San Pasquale who did it.

Who but San Pasquale would think of such a thing ?

There is still another thing to be told about San Pasquale. It was the tall Kristoforo from Tre Castagni. He was not a wicked man, but he had one bad habit. He never could open his mouth without swearing. If he said two words, one of them was sure to be an oath. And do you think it availed however much his wife and neighbors admonished him? But over his bed he had a little picture representing San Pasquale, and that little image succeeded in helping him. Every night it swung back and forth in its frame; it swung fast or slowly, according as he had sworn during the day. And he noticed that he should not be able to sleep a single night until he had given up swearing.

In Diamante San Pasquale has a church, lying just outside Porta Etnea, a short distance down the mountain. It is small and poor, but the white walls and the red cupola lie beautifully imbedded in a grove of almond trees.

Therefore as soon as the almond trees blossom in the spring San Pasquale's church becomes the most beautiful in Diamante.

San Pasquale's church is very unfortunate and forsaken, because service can never be held there. When the Garibaldists, who rescued Sicily, came to Diamante, they encamped in San Pasquale and in the Franciscan monastery, close by the church. And into the church itself they brought dumb animals, and carried on such a wild life with women and cards

there, that ever since it has been considered unholy and unclean, and never more been opened for service.

Therefore it is only when the almond trees are in blossom, that strangers and great people notice San Pasquale. For although the whole slope of Etna is then white with almond blossoms, the best and largest trees, however, stand around the old condemned church. But poor people in Diamante come to San Pasquale all the year round. For although the church is always closed, one goes there to ask advice of the saint, of whom there is an image just at the entrance under a large baldachin; and it is customary to entreat it to foretell something of the future. No one predicts the future better than San Pasquale.

Now just that morning, when Gaetano left Diamante, it happened that the clouds came driving down from Etna, so thick, as if they had been dust raised by innumerable armies, and they filled the whole sky like dark-winged dragons, and they vomited rain, and they sputtered out mist and darkness. And the air became so thick over Diamante, that one could not see across the street. It was damp and wet everywhere, the floor was just as wet as the ceiling, the doorposts became dripping, the balustrades full of drops, the mist hung in the passages and rooms, so that one might have thought them full of smoke.

But this very morning at an early hour, before the rain had commenced, a rich English lady rode in her large traveling-carriage from Catania to make the tour round Etna. When she had ridden a few hours, the terrible rain commenced, enveloping everything in a mist.

As she did not wish to miss seeing the glorious re-

gions through which she passed, she decided to drive into the nearest city and remain there, till the storm had passed over. And this city was no other than Diamante.

The English lady was Miss Tottenham, and it was she who had moved into Palazzo Palmeri in Catania. Among other things which she brought with her in her trunks was the image of Christ, whose help Donna Micaela had invoked the previous evening. The image, which now was both old and badly used, she constantly carried with her as a remembrance of an old friend, whose riches she had inherited.

One might have believed that San Pasquale knew what a great miracle-worker the image was, for it seemed as though he wished to greet him. At the same moment that Miss Tottenham's carriage drove through Porta Etnea the bells began to ring in San Pasquale's church.

And they rang the whole day entirely of their own accord.

San Pasquale's bells are not much larger than those used on farms to call the laborers home and like those they hang on top of the roof under a little hood, and are put into motion by pulling a rope hanging down along the church-wall.

It is not heavy work to make the bells ring, nevertheless they are not so light that they swing entirely by themselves. He who has seen old Fra Felice from the Franciscan monastery put his foot in the loop of the rope and work it up and down to set them in motion, may well know that the bells could not begin to ring without help.

But that is just what they did that morning. The

rope was tightly fastened to a cramp-iron in the wall, and there was no one who touched it. Nor did anyone sit crouching under the hood and set them in motion. One saw distinctly how the bells swung back and forth, and how the clappers struck against the metal mouth. How they had been put in motion no one knew.

When Donna Micaela woke, the bells were already ringing, and she lay still a long time listening and listening. She had never heard anything sweeter. She did not know, that it was a miracle. She lay there, thinking how beautiful it was. She lay wondering if real metal bells could sound like that.

And there is no knowing what kind of metal it was, which chimed in San Pasquale's bells that day.

It seemed to her that the bells told her that now she would be happy, now she would live and love, now she would go to meet something grand and beautiful, now she would nevermore regret and never be sad.

Her heart began to dance to some sort of stately measure, and under the ringing of bells she marched solemnly into a great castle. And to whom could the castle belong, who could be master of such a magnificent place, if not love?

It can no longer be concealed; when Donna Micaela awoke, she felt that she loved Gaetano and that she desired nothing higher than to be allowed to accompany him.

And when Donna Micaela drew the shutter from her window and saw the gray morning she sent it a kiss and whispered: "O, morning of the day, when I may depart, you are the loveliest morning I have ever

beheld, and although you are so gray, I would like to kiss and caress you."

But she liked the bells most.

From this one may certainly know that her love was strong, for to all others it was distressing to listen to these bells, that would not cease ringing. No one minded them during the first half hour. During the first half hour one scarcely heard them, but during the second and third!

Do not think that San Pasquale's little bells could not make themselves heard. They have always had a powerful sound, and now it was as if the sound in them grew and grew. Soon it seemed as if there was nothing but bells up in the mist, as if the whole sky was full of them, although one could not see them on account of the clouds.

When Donna Elisa first heard the ringing, she thought it was San Guiseppe's little bell, and afterwards that it was the cathedral bell itself. Then she thought she heard the Dominican monastery bell also, and at last she knew for certain that all the bells of the city were ringing with all their might, all the bells in the five monasteries and the seven churches. It seemed to her she could distinguish them all, until she asked and learned, that it was only San Pasquale's small bells that rang.

During the first hours, and before it was yet known everywhere that the bells rung entirely of themselves, one only noticed that the rain-drops kept time with the ringing, and that all who spoke had a clear, ringing voice. One also found that it was impossible to play either mandolin or guitar, because the sound of the bells mingled with the music and made it deafen-

ing, nor could one read, because the letters swung back and forth like clappers.

Soon the people could not bear the sight of flowers that hung on long stems, because they imagined that they too swung back and forth. And they complained that they no longer had odor, but sound only.

Others, however, declared that the mist which filled the air moved in time to the sound of the bells, and they said that all clock pendulums went by them and that all who passed by out in the rain tried to do likewise.

And that was when the bells had rung only a few hours and when the people still laughed at them.

But the third hour the ringing seemed to increase still more, and then some stuffed cotton in their ears, while others buried themselves in pillows. But notwithstanding this, one felt how the air vibrated, and how everything moved in time. And they who fled into the dark attic heard the sound of the bells clearly and distinctly as though it came from the sky, and they who fled into the cellar heard the sound there, rolling and rumbling, as though San Pasqual's church stood in the lower regions.

And all the people of Diamante began to be frightened except Donna Micaela, who was protected from all fear by love.

Now they began to think that it must signify something that it was San Pasquale's bells that rang. And all began to ask what the saint predicted. Each one had his or her own fear, and believed that San Pasquale augured just what was least wanted. And every one had some conscience-

burdening deed to remember and believed that San Pasquale called down punishment for it particularly.

But towards noon, as the bells still continued to ring, one felt sure that San Pasquale rang down such calamity over Diamante that one could not expect less than that all the people should die during the year.

And the pretty Giannita came weeping to Donna Micaela and complaining that it was San Pasquale who rang. O God, if it had only been another than San Pasquale!"

"He sees something terrible coming," said Giannita. "The mist does not hinder him from seeing as far as he likes. He sees an enemy's fleet approaching on the sea. He sees arising from Etna a cloud of ashes which will fall upon us and bury us."

But Donna Micaela smiled, thinking that she knew very well what San Pasquale was thinking of. "He is ringing a dirge over the beautiful almond flowers which the rain destroys," she said to Giannita.

She felt no alarm, for she believed that the bells rang only for her. They lulled her into dreams. She sat quite still in the music-room, and let joy hold sway within her. But in the whole world around her was fear and uneasiness and anxiety. One could no longer sit quietly at one's work. One could think of nothing but the great disaster which San Pasquale predicted.

One began to give the beggars more gifts than they had ever had before; but the beggars were not pleased, as they did not believe they would be permitted to live to see the morrow. And the priests could in nowise feel glad, although they had so many

penitents, that they were obliged to sit in the confessional all day, and although gift upon gift was placed before the altars of the saints.

Not even Vicenzo da Lozzo, the letter writer, rejoiced at the day, although many besieged his writing-table under the court-house loggia, and would gladly pay a soldo per word, if he would write for them on this, the last day, a farewell message to the absent loved ones.

There was no possibility of keeping school that day, for the children cried the whole time. At noon the mothers came, their faces rigid with fright, and took the little ones home with them, so that they might at least be together if anything happened.

Likewise all tailor and shoemaker apprentices had a holiday. But the poor boys dared not enjoy it, but would rather remain in the workshop and wait.

And the ringing still continued in the afternoon.

Then the old porter at Palazzo Geraci, where now only beggars live, who himself is a beggar clad in rags, donned the light green velvet livery, which he only uses at the feasts of the saints and on the king's birthday. And no one saw him sitting there in his doorway, wearing this splendor, without a shudder of fear, for one well knew that the old man expected that nothing less than ruin would rush in through the gate he was watching.

It was pitiful how the people frightened each other.

Torino, poor fellow, who once had been a well-to-do man went from house to house proclaiming that now the time had come when all who had deceived and impoverished him would be punished. He

went into all the little shops along the Corso, struck the counter with his hand and declared that now every one in the city would be judged, because they had been unanimous in ruining him.

And what one heard about the card party at Café Europa was equally frightful. The same four players had sat there at the card-table year after year, and it had never occurred to any one that they could do anything else. But now all of a sudden they dropped the cards and promised each other that if they escaped death this day, they would never touch them again.

Donna Elisa's shop was packed with people, and to move the saints and avert the impending danger, they bought all the sacred things she had to sell. But Donna Elisa was only thinking of Gaetano, who was absent, and believed that San Pasquale predicted that he would be lost during the journey, and felt no joy whatever over all the money she was earning.

But when San Pasquale's bells continued to ring all the afternoon, it seemed almost beyond endurance.

Because now every one knew that it was the earthquake they portended, and that all Diamante would become a heap of ruins.

In the alleys, where the houses themselves seemed to fear the earthquake and huddled close together for mutual support, the people moved their miserable old furniture out on the street in the rain, and stretched tents of bed-quilts over them. And they even carried out the little children in their cradles, sheltering them under large boxes.

In spite of the rain there was such a bustle on the

Corso, that one could hardly force one's way through. For all must pass through Porta Etnea to see the bells swing and swing, and convince themselves that no one touched the rope. And all who came there, fell on their knees on the road, where the water ran in streams and the mud was bottomless.

The gates of San Pasquale's church were closed as always, but outside, the old gray friar Fra Felice went around among the suppliants with a brass plate and received gifts.

One by one the terrified people walked up to the image of San Pasquale, under the baldachin, and kissed its hand. One elderly woman came carrying something very carefully and sheltering it with a green umbrella. It was a glass of water and oil, in which a little wick swam and flickered with a feeble flame. She placed it before the image, and knelt before it.

Although it occurred to many that one ought to try to fasten the bells, there was no one who dared propose it, because one dared not silence the voice of God.

Neither did anyone dare to say that it was a device of old Fra Felice to collect money. Fra Felice was loved. Woe to him who had said anything of the kind.

Donna Micaela also came out to San Pasquale and brought her father with her. She came with head erect and wholly without fear. She came there to thank Him, who rang in the great passion into her soul. "My life begins this day" she said to herself.

Neither did it appear as though Don Ferrante was

afraid, but more grim and cross than ever. Because it seemed that all felt they must go to him in the shop, and tell him what they thought and hear his opinion, as he was an Alagona, and had ruled the city many years.

The whole day panic-stricken, trembling people came into his shop. And all came up to him and said: "What a terrible ringing, Don Ferrante. What will become of us, Don Ferrante?"

There was hardly any one of the inhabitants of Diamante, who did not come into Don Ferrante's shop to consult with him. As long as the ringing lasted, they stood leaning on the counter without buying for as much as a soldo.

Even Ugo Favara, the spleeny advocate, came into the shop and taking a chair sat down behind the counter. And the whole day Don Ferrante had him sitting there, deathly pale, entirely motionless, suffering unheard-of torture without uttering a word.

But every five minutes Torino-il-Martello came in and struck the counter saying that now the time had come when Don Ferrante would have his punishment.

Don Ferrante was a hard man, but he could not escape the bells. And the longer he heard them, the more he began to wonder why all the people crowded into his shop, as if they meant something in particular. It was as if they wanted to make him responsible for the ringing and for the evil it portended.

He had not told any one, but he supposed his wife had circulated it. He began to believe that everybody thought of the same thing, although they

dared not say it. He imagined that the advocate sat expecting that he would yield. He believed that the whole city came in to see if he really would dare to send his father-in-law away.

Donna Elisa, who had so much to do in her own shop that she could not come herself, sent old Pacifica in to him continually and asked what he thought of the ringing. And the rector came also into the shop for a moment and said, like all the rest: "Have you ever heard such frightful ringing, Don Ferrante?"

And Don Ferrante wondered if the advocate and Don Matteo and all the others came only to reproach him because he wanted to send away Cavaliere Palmeri.

The blood commenced to throb at his temples. At times the room seemed to turn round and round. And continually someone came in and asked: "Have you ever heard such a terrible ringing?"

But the one who did not come and ask at all was Donna Micaela. She could not come, as she felt no fear. That the passion which was to fill her life had now come, filled her with rapture and pride. "My life will be full and rich," she said. And it terrified her that hitherto she had been only a child.

She was to depart with the mail-stage, which passed Diamante at ten in the evening. When it got to be about four o'clock she thought it was best to tell her father everything and begin to pack his things.

But this did not seem to her difficult either. Her father would soon follow them to Argentine. She would beg him to be patient a few months, till they had a home to offer him. And she was sure that

he would be pleased that she went away from Don Ferrante.

She experienced a delicious stupor. Nothing seemed dreadful to her any more. There was no shame, no danger, none whatever.

She only longed to hear the mail-coach come rumbling along,

Then she heard the sound of many voices on the steps leading to the upper story. She heard the heavy tramp of numerous feet. She saw people passing through the open colonnade, which ran around the yard and which one must pass through to enter the rooms. She saw that they carried something heavy between them, but she could not see what it was, because there were so many people.

The pale advocate went before the others. He came and told her that Don Ferrante had wanted to drive Torino out of the shop, but Torino had then stabbed him with his knife. It was nothing dangerous. He was already bandaged and would be well in two weeks.

Don Ferrante was now carried in, and his eyes strayed about the room, not to seek Donna Micaela, but Cavaliere Palmeri. When he saw him, he only motioned to his wife, and although he uttered no word, she understood that her father need never leave his house, never, never.

She pressed her hands to her eyes. What, her father need not go away! She was saved! A miracle had happened for her sake!

Ah, now she must be happy, be satisfied! But she was neither. She felt the most terrible pain.

She could not go away. Her father would be al-

lowed to remain, and she must be faithful to Don Ferrante. She struggled hard to grasp it, but it was true. She could not go.

She tried to look at it in another light. Perhaps it was a false conclusion. She had become so bewildered. No, no, it was so, she could not.

O, how faint and languid she was! Yet had she not been traveling, and traveling all the livelong day? She have been so long on the road. And she would never reach the end of her journey. She fell into a sort of stupor.

There was nothing else to do than to rest after the endless journey she had performed. But how should she ever be able to find rest? She began to weep at the thought of never reaching the end. Her whole life would be one long, endless journey.

VIII

TWO CANZONETS

It was the morning after the day when San Pasquale's bells had rung, and Donna Elisa sat in her shop counting money. The day before, when all the people were afraid, there had been a brisk sale, and in the morning when she entered the shop, she had at first almost felt frightened. For the whole shop was desolate and empty, the medallions were gone, the wax candles were gone and so were the large clusters of rosaries. All Gaetano's handsome images of saints had been taken down from the shelves and sold, and it was a real grief to Donna Elisa not to see this gathering of saintly men and women around her.

She pulled out the money drawer and it was so full that it was difficult to open. And while she counted her money, she cried over it as though it had been false. For of what use to her were all these dirty lire bills and these large coppers now that she had lost Gaetano!

Ah, if he had only remained at home one day more, then he had not needed to go, because now she was amply provided with money.

While she sat thus, she heard the mail-coach stop outside her door. But she did not look up even. She did not care about what happened, since Gaetano

was away. Just then the door opened, and the bell rang frightfully. She only wept and counted. Then some one said: "Donna Elisa, Donna Elisa!" And it was Gaetano.

"O God, why have you come home?" she cried.—"Why, you've sold all your images so I was obliged to come home to carve new ones for you."—"But how did you find it out?"—"I went down to the mail-coach at two o'clock last night. I met Rosa Alfari, and she told me everything."—"How fortunate that it occurred to you to go down to the mail-coach!"—"Yes, it certainly was!" said Gaetano.

And in less than an hour Gaetano was again busy in his workshop, and Donna Elisa, who had nothing to do in her empty shop, kept coming to the door continually to look at him. Well, well, to think that he actually stood there again carving! She could not let five minutes pass without coming to look at him.

But when Donna Micaela heard that he had returned, she felt no joy, but rather anger and despair. For she feared that Gaetano would come and tempt her.

She had heard that a rich English lady had come to Diamante the day the bells rang. It affected her deeply, when she heard that it was the lady with the image of Christ who had come. It had then come as soon as she had invoked its aid. The rain and the ringing were its doings.

She now endeavored to rejoice at the thought, that a miracle had happened for her sake. To feel herself encompassed by God's grace was more to her than all earthly happiness. She prayed that

nothing earthly might come and snatch away from her this blessed rapture.

But when she met Gaetano on the street, he hardly noticed her, and when she met him at Donna Elisa's, he did not take her hand or speak to her.

For the truth was, that although Gaetano had come back, because it had been too grievous for him to go without Donna Micaela, he did not wish to tempt and entice her. He saw that she was under the saints' protection, and that she had become to him so sacred that he hardly dared to dream of her.

He wished to be near her, not for the sake of loving her, but because he believed that her life would bloom with holy deeds. Gaetano longed for miracles just as a gardener longs for the first rose of spring.

But as the weeks passed, and Gaetano never sought to approach Donna Micaela, she began to doubt and think that he never had loved her. She said to herself, that he had drawn from her the promise to flee with him only to show her that the Madonna could perform a miracle.

But if that had been the case, she did not know why he had not continued his journey, but returned.

This caused her anxiety. It seemed to her she could not control her love with less than to know if Gaetano loved her. She weighed for and against, and she felt more and more certain that he had never loved her.

While Donna Micaela pondered upon this, she was obliged to sit and keep Don Ferrante company. He had been sick a long time. He had had several attacks of apoplexy, and had risen from his bed a

broken-down man. He had become old, weak of intellect and timid, so that he never dared to be alone. He never worked in the shop, he was like a different person entirely.

He had been seized by a great desire to be grand and distinguished. Donna Micaela was very kind towards him and sat prattling with him for hours together.

"Who could it be," she would ask, "who once stood on the market-place with plumes in his hat, and braid on his jacket, and sword at his side, and who played so beautifully that it was said his music was uplifting as Etna and mighty as the sea? And who was it that caught sight of a poor signorina in mourning, who dared not show her face, and came forward to her and offered her his arm? Who could that be? Could it be Don Ferrante, who stands in his haberdasher's shop all the week wearing bag-cap and short jacket? No, that can't be possible. An old merchant could not do anything like that!"

Don Ferrante laughed. That was just the way he liked to have her talk to him. She must also tell him how it would be when he came to court, what the king would say and what the queen would say. "So the ancient Alagona have come to life again." they would say at court. And who is the reviver of the race? They will wonder and wonder. The Don Ferrante, who is a Sicilian prince and Spanish grandee, is he one and the same man who stood in the haberdasher's shop in Diamante, shouting at the wagoners? No, they will say, it cannot be the same! It cannot possibly be the same!

Don Ferrante liked this, and he could listen to her

day in and day out. He never wearied, and Donna Micaela was very patient with him.

But one day in the midst of her babbling, in came Donna Elisa. "Sister-in-law, have you the legend of the Holy Virgin of Pompeii, if so, kindly lend it me," she asked.—"What, are you going to begin to read?" asked Donna Micaela.—"Bless me, you know very well that I can't read. It is Gaetano who asks for it."

Donna Micaela did not have the legend of the Holy Virgin of Pompeii. Yet she did not say so to Donna Elisa, but went to her bookcase and took down a small book, containing a collection of Sicilian love songs and gave it to Donna Elisa, who carried the little book to Gaetano. But hardly had Donna Micaela done this, than she regretted it deeply. And she asked herself what she meant by acting thus, she whom the Christ-child had helped.

She blushed with shame when she thought of how she had marked one of the canzonets, which ran thus:—

To one question, answer give, I pray.
I have asked the night, I've asked the day,
Flight of birds and clouds that sped,
Into boiling water I've poured lead,
From the flow'ret blade by blade I tore,
Lured the swarthy seeress to my door.
Heaven's holy saints I asked at last:
"Does he love me now as in the past?"

She had hoped somewhat that she should receive an answer to this. But it served her right that no answer came. It served her right, if Gaetano despised her and called her importunate.

Still she had not wished to do anything wicked. All she had desired had been to learn if Gaetano loved her.

Again a few weeks passed, and Donna Micaela sat constantly with Don Ferrante.

But one day Donna Elisa had persuaded her to go out. "Come down into my garden, sister-in-law, and look at my big magnolia tree. You've never seen anything so beautiful."

She had followed Donna Elisa across the street and entered her garden. And Donna Elisa's magnolia was like the radiant sun, so that one became aware of it even before one saw it. The air was filled with its fragrance and there was such a humming of bees and twittering of birds!

When Donna Micaela saw the tree, she could hardly breathe. It was very tall and large, with a graceful regular growth, and its large, firm leaves were of a fresh dark-green shade. Now it was completely covered with large white flowers which so illumined and adorned it that one fancied it arrayed for a feast, and one felt how an intoxicating joy exhaled from the tree. And Donna Micaela felt a strange, irresistible power gaining control over her. She drew down one of the stiff twigs, spread out the flower, which it bore without breaking it, took a pin and began to prick letters in the petals.—"What are you doing, sister-in-law?" asked Donna Elisa.—"O, nothing, nothing."—"In my time the young girls used to prick love-letters in the magnolia blossoms."—"Perhaps they do so still."—"Take care, I shall look and see what you have written, when you are gone."—"But you can't read."—"I have Gae-

tano"—" And Luca. It is certainly better that you ask Luca."

When Donna Micaela came home, she repented. Would Donna Elisa show the flower to Gaetano? No, surely not, Donna Elisa was too wise. But what if he himself had seen her from his workshop window? Well, he would not say anything. But it was she who was making herself ridiculous.

She would never do anything like that again, never, never! Was it not best for her not to know anything? It was best for her that Gaetano did not care about her.

Nevertheless, she wondered what answer she should get. But none came.

And so another week passed. One day Don Ferrante took it into his head to go out riding in the afternoon. In the carriage-shed of the summer palace stood an old-fashioned gala-coach, which certainly was a hundred years old or more. It was very high, it had a small, narrow basket swinging on leather straps between the back wheels, which were as large as the water-wheel of a mill. It was painted white, with gilding; it was covered with red velvet and had a coat-of-arms on the door.

Once it had been a great honor to ride in that carriage, and when the ancient Alagonas came riding along the Corso, the people had risen from their thresholds and crowded about the doors and leaned out over the balconies to see it. Then it had been drawn by graceful horses from Berberry, the coachman had worn a wig, and the footman galloons, and it had been driven with silk-embroidered reins.

But now Don Ferrante wanted to harness his old horses to the gala-coach and let his old shop-hand act as coachman. When Donna Micaela told him that this would not do, Don Ferrante commenced to weep. What would people think of him if he did not show himself on the Corso in his carriage in the afternoon. That surely was the last thing a gentleman denied himself. How should any one know that he was a nobleman if he did not ride up and down the street in the ancient Alagona carriage.

Don Ferrante's happiest moment since his illness was when he rode out for the first time. He sat erect, nodding and waving his hand very conscientiously to all he met. And the people of Diamante bowed and took off the hat, so that it swept the ground. Why not give Don Ferrante that pleasure?

Donna Micaela accompanied him, for Don Ferrante dared not ride alone. She had felt reluctant about going with him, but Don Ferrante had wept and reminded her that he married her when she was despised and poor. She ought not to be ungrateful, she ought not to forget what he had done for her, but go with him. Why didn't she wish to ride in his carriage? It was the finest carriage in Sicily.

"Why don't you want to ride with me?" said Don Ferrante. "Remember I'm the only one that loves you. Don't you see that not even your father loves you? You must not be ungrateful."

In this way he had compelled Donna Micaela to take a seat in the gala-coach.

But what she had expected did not happen. No one laughed. The women courtesied, and the men bowed as solemnly as though the coach had been a

hundred years younger. And Donna Micaela could not detect a smile on a single face.

Nor could there be found in all Diamante any one who had wished to laugh. For all knew well enough how Donna Micaela had to bear with Don Ferrante. They knew how he loved her and how he wept when she left him for a single moment. They also knew how he tortured her with jealousy and how he tore her hats to pieces if they were becoming to her, and never gave her money for new gowns, in order that no one else might think her beautiful and love her. In the meantime he was always telling her that she was so homely that no one but himself could bear to see her face.

And because they knew all this in Diamante, there was no one that laughed. What, laugh at her, who sat prattling with a sick man! The people of Diamante are pious Christians, not barbarians.

So the gala-coach in all its faded pomp, rolled up and down the Corso of Diamante during the hour between five and six. And in Diamante it drove all alone, because there were no grand carriages except that. Still all knew that at the same hour all the equipages in Rome drove to Monte Pincio, and all in Naples to Villa Nazionale, and all in Florence to the Cascina, and all in Palermo to La Favorita.

But when the carriage made the trip down towards Porta Etnea for the third time, the merry blast of a horn was heard from the road outside.

And in through the gate dashed a high English dog-cart.

That, too, no doubt, was meant to be old-fashioned. The postilion, who rode on the right-hand leader,

wore leather breeches and wig. The vehicle was like an old diligence with a coupé behind the coach-box, a high narrow hood and seats on the roof.

But everything was new, the horses were fine, strong animals, carriage and harness gleamed, and the occupants were several young ladies and gentlemen making a tour up to Etna. And naturally they could not help laughing when they drove by the old gala-coach. They leaned forward where they sat on the high carriage-roof, to look at it, and their loud and ringing laughter echoed between the tall, quiet houses of Diamante.

Donna Micaela felt very unhappy. They who drove by were some of her old friends. What would they say when they came home? "We have seen Micaela Palmeri in Diamante." And they would laugh and relate, laugh and relate.

Her whole life seemed utterly wretched. She was nothing but a slave of a fool. During her whole life she would have nothing else to do but to prattle with Don Ferrante.

When she came home she was completely exhausted. She was so faint and weary that she could hardly drag herself up the stairs.

And the whole time Don Ferrante was congratulating himself, that these grand people had met him and seen his splendor. He told her that now no one would mind her being homely, nor that her father had stolen. Now they knew that she was the wife of a grand gentleman.

After dinner Donna Micaela sat perfectly silent and let her father talk with Don Ferrante.

Just then a mandolin began to hum softly under

the window of the summer palace. It was a solitary mandolin without accompaniment of guitar or violin. Nothing could be more frail and airy, nothing more charming and touching! It could hardly be believed that human hands touched the strings. It was as if bees and crickets and grasshoppers were holding a concert.

"Still another who has fallen in love with Giannita," said Don Ferrante. "What a woman is Giannita. Every one can see that she is beautiful. Were I young, I should fall in love with Giannita. She knows how to love."

Donna Micaela started. No doubt he was right, she thought. The mandolin player meant Giannita. To-night Giannita was with her mother, but she now lived in the summer palace. Donna Micaela had brought this about, after Don Ferrante had become infirm.

But Donna Micaela liked the music, whoever it was for. It was sweet and gentle and soothing. She went softly into her little cabinet that she might listen better in the darkness and solitude.

In there a sweet, strong odor filled the room. What was this? Her hands commenced to tremble, before she found a candle and a match. On her work-table lay a large full blown magnolia-flower.

On one of the petals was pricked: "Who loves me?" And now below it said: "Gaetano."

Beside the flower lay a little white book full of love-songs. And there was a mark by one of the canzonets:

No one of my love hath ever known,
In secret and in silence it hath grown.

And like a miser I have watched my treasure,
Of that to dream hath been my only pleasure.
When once the shriver by my bed shall stand,
And all the secrets of the soul demand,
The door I'll close and throw away the key,
Hide my heart's riches in Eternity!

The mandolin continued to play. There is something of fresh air and sunshine in the mandolin. Something of nature's lightheartedness.

IX

THE FLIGHT

AT this time the little image from Aracoeli was still in Diamante.

The English lady who owned it had become charmed with Diamante, and could not tear herself away.

She had rented the first-floor story in the hotel and had arranged herself there as in a home. She bought for large sums of money everything she came across of old earthenware and old coins. She bought mosaics and altar-pieces, and holy images. She became possessed of the idea that she must get together a collection of all the saints of the Church.

So she heard of Gaetano, and sent for him to come up to her at the hotel.

Gaetano gathered together what he had carved during the last days, and took it with him to Miss Tottenham. She was very much pleased with his little images and wished to buy them all.

But the rich English lady's rooms were like the lumber rooms at a museum. There were all sorts of things, and all was disorder and confusion. There stood trunks, half emptied, there hung cloaks and hats, there lay paintings and engravings, there were hand-books on traveling, tea services and alcohol-lamps, there were halberds, missals, mandolins and escutcheons!

And all this opened Gaetano's eyes. He blushed suddenly, bit his lip and began packing together his images.

He had caught sight of an image of the Christ-child. It was the ejected image standing there in the midst of all this confusion, with its poor crown on its head and brass-shoes on his feet. The paint was scraped off the face, the rings and ornaments were tarnished, and the swaddle was yellow with age.

When Gaetano saw this, he did not wish to sell his images to Miss Tottenham, but was just about to go away. When she asked what the matter was with him, his anger broke loose and he began to chide her.

Did she know that many of the things she had around her were holy?

Did she know or didn't she know, that this was the holy Christ-child? And she had let it lose three fingers on one hand and let the gems fall out of the crown, and had let it lie there, soiled and tarnished and dishonored. And if she treated the image of God's own Son like that, how would she treat others? He would not sell her anything.

When Gaetano railed against her in this way, Miss Tottenham was delighted, delighted.

Here was the true faith, and the right and holy wrath. And this young man must become an artist.

To England, to England he must go! She would send him to the great master, her friend, who was trying to reform art, to him, who wished to teach the people how to make beautiful household furnishings, beautiful church interiors, who wished to make a new world.

She decided and planned, and Gaetano acqu esced, because he was now glad to get away from Diamante.

He saw that he could no longer endure living there. He believed that it was God who led him away from temptation.

He went away unnoticed. Donna Micaela scarcely knew of it before he was gone. He had not dared to come and bid her farewell.

X

SIROCCO

AFTER that two peaceful years passed. The only thing that happened in Diamante and in all Sicily, was that the people became poorer and poorer.

It was in autumn, about the time of vintage.

And at that time the canzonets leap perfect to the lips; at that time new and exquisite melodies flow from the mandolins.

Then flocks of youth set out for the vineyards, and the whole day there is work and laughter, dance and laughter the whole night, and no one thinks of sleep.

Then the bright sea of air over the mountain is more beautiful than ever. Then the air sparkles with sallies of wit, and glittering glances pass through it, like flashes of lightning, then it gathers light and warmth not from the sun alone, but also from the radiant faces of the young Etna-women.

This autumn, however, all vineyards were devastated by phylloxera. No grape-pickers pressed forward between the vines, no long lines of women wound their way to the presses, and at night there was no dancing on the flat roofs.

And this autumn the clear, light, October air hovered no more over the Etna regions. But as though it were in league with need, came the heavy, paralyzing desert wind from Africa, bringing with it dust and vapor which darkened the whole sky.

As long as this autumn lasted one never felt a fresh mountain breeze. The disastrous Sirocco blew continually.

At times it came dry and filled with sand, and so burning hot that it was necessary to close doors and windows and remain in one's rooms in order not to perish.

But oftenest it came warm and damp and oppressive. And the people never found any peace. Grief never left them, and troubles heaped themselves upon them as snow-drifts on the high mountains.

And anxiety came to Donna Micaela also, where she constantly sat watching beside her aged husband, Don Ferrante.

During that autumn she never heard laughter, never a song. The people stole past each other, so full of anger and despair that they seemed nigh stifling. And she said to herself, that in all probability they were dreaming of an insurrection. She understood that they must rebel. It certainly would not help any one, but they had no other means to resort to.

At the beginning of the autumn she had sat on her balcony and listened to the people talking on the street. They talked of nothing but the distress that prevailed. We have had a bad year for wheat and wine, there's a crisis in sulphur and oranges, all Sicily's yellow gold has failed. What, then, shall one live of?

And Donna Micaela knew that this was dreadful. Wheat, wine, oranges and sulphur, all their yellow gold.

She also began to comprehend that the misery was so great that the people could not continue to bear

it, and she complained that life should be made so hard. She asked why the people should be compelled to pay such heavy taxes. Why should there be a salt tax so that a poor woman was not allowed to go down to the shore and get a pail full of salt water, but had to buy dear salt at the government stores? And why should there be a tax on the palm-trees? With anger in his heart the peasant now felled the old trees, which long had waved over the beautiful isle. And why should a tax be levied on windows? What was the meaning of that? That poor people should take away their windows, move out of their rooms and live in the cellars?

In the sulphur mines there were strikes and riots, and the government sent troops to force the people back to work. Donna Micaela wondered if the government did not know that there were no machines in those mines. It then had never heard that children dragged the ore from the deep pits. It did not know that these children were slaves, it could not imagine that their parents had sold them to the employers. Or if the government knew it, why did it wish to help the mine owners?

All at once she heard about a great number of crimes. And again she began with her questions. Why were the people allowed to become so malignant? Why were they allowed to be so poor and ragged? Why should they all be so ragged? She knew that he who lived in Palermo or Catania, need not ask thus. But he who lived in Diamante could not but fear and ask. Why did the people become so poor that they died of hunger?

The summer was hardly at an end, it was only to-

wards the last of October, and already Donna Micaela began to picture to herself the day when the insurrection would break out. She saw the famished people come rushing along the street. They would plunder the stores, and they would plunder the houses of the few rich people in the city. Outside the summer palace the wild throng would stop and climb up to the balconies and casement windows. "Out with the old Alagona jewels, out with Don Ferrante's millions!" The summer palace was their dream! They believed it was as full of gold as a fairy palace.

But when they found nothing, they would put the dagger to her throat, that she might deliver to them treasures she had never possessed, and she would be murdered by the ravenous masses.

Why couldn't the great landholders remain at home? Why should they exasperate the poor by living in grand style in Rome and Paris? One would not feel so bitter towards them if they stayed at home; one would not swear so solemnly to kill all the rich when the time came.

Donna Micaela only wished she could have fled to one of these great cities. But both her father and Don Ferrante fell ill that autumn, and for their sakes she was obliged to remain where she was. And she knew that she should be killed as a peace-offering for the transgressions of the rich against the poor.

For many years misfortunes had gathered over Sicily, and now they could no longer be kept back. Now Etna itself began to threaten with an eruption.

At night the smoke was fiery red, and the rumbling was heard all the way to Diamante. All would come to an end. All would be destroyed.

Did n't the government know of the ill feeling? Ah, the government had finally learned of it and had appointed a committee. It was a great comfort to see the delegates come riding one day along the Corso in Diamante. If only the people had understood that they meant well by them. But the women had stood in their doorways, spitting at the fine gentlemen from the mainland, and the children had ran after the carriage shouting: "Thief, thief!"

Everything one did only stimulated the insurrection. And there was no one who could take charge of the people and pacify them. The government officials were not to be trusted. Those who only took bribes, were least despised. It was said, however, that several were members of Mafian, and that all they thought of was to rifle money and gain power.

As the time passed, signs signifying that something terrible was approaching grew more numerous. In the papers one read that throngs of laborers gathered in the large cities and marched through the streets. One also read in the papers of how the socialist leaders traveled through the country, making exciting speeches. And at once it became clear to Donna Micaela where all the trouble came from. It was the socialists that goaded the insurrection onward. It was their speeches that set the minds fermenting. How could they be allowed to do this? Who then was king of Sicily? Was his name Don Felice or Umberto?

Donna Micaela felt a horror which never left her. It was as if one had conspired against her. And the more she heard about the socialists, the more she feared them.

Giannita tried to calm her. "We have no socialists in Diamante," she said. "No one thinks of rebelling in Diamante." But Donna Micaela asked her if she did not know what it signified, that the old spinstresses sat in their dark corners telling of the great hero robbers, and of the famous Palermo fisherman, Guiseppi Alesi, whom they called the Masaniello of Sicily?

If only the socialists could get the insurrection started, Diamante would join also. All Diamante knew that something dreadful was pending. One had seen the great black monk haunting Palazzo Geraci. Owls screeched all night long, and some declared that the cocks crowed at sunset and were silent at daybreak.

One day in November Diamante was suddenly filled with terrible people: men with beast-like faces and bristly beards and with large hands on tremendously long arms. Some of them wore wide, fluttering linen clothes, and one seemed to recognize in them famous brigands, and lately-released galley-slaves.

Giannita related that all these wild people haunted the inland mountains, and had crossed Simeto and come to Diamante, because of a rumor that the insurrection had already broken out. But when all had been quiet and the carabineer barracks full of people, they had departed.

Donna Micaela was thinking of these people constantly, and expecting that they would be her murderers. She seemed to see their fluttering linen clothes and beastly faces. She knew they were lurking in their caves, waiting for the day when they

should hear shots and signs of alarm from Diamante. Then they would rush upon the city with fire and sword, and march at the head of all these starving people as the generals and leaders of the pillage.

That whole autumn Donna Micaela had to nurse both her father and Don Ferrante, who lay ill month after month. She had been told, however, that their lives were nowise in danger.

She was very glad as long as Don Ferrante was spared, for it was her only hope that the people would have regard for him, who was of an old and respected family.

Sitting there at the bedside she often longed for Gaetano, and many a time she wished he were home. She would feel no anguish or fear of death, were he again in his workshop. Then she could not have felt anything but safety and peace.

Even now, when he was far away, her thoughts went in search of him when fright almost drove her mad. She had not, however, received a single letter from him, while he had been away, so that at times she believed that he had entirely forgotten her. At other times she was certain that he loved her, because she felt so compelled to think of him that she knew that in spirit he was near her and called her.

This autumn she finally received a letter from Gaetano. Ah, what a letter! Donna Micaela's first thought was to burn it.

She had gone up on the terrace in order to be alone when she read it. Up there she had once heard Gaetano's declaration of love, and that had not affected her at all. That had neither warmed her nor frightened her.

But this letter was different. He begged her to come to him, to be his, give herself to him. As she read it she was shocked at herself. She felt a desire to shout into the air: "I am coming, I am coming," and so just start off. It drew her and carried her away.

"Let us be happy!" he wrote. "We are wasting time, the years pass. Let us be happy!"

He described for her how they would live. He related accounts of other women, who had obeyed love and become happy. He wrote both enticingly and convincingly.

But it was not exactly the contents, it was the love, breathing and glowing in the letter, that filled her with rapture. It rose from the paper like an intoxicating incense, and she felt how it thrilled her. Every word spoke of intense longing.

Now she was no longer a saint to him as before. It came overwhelmingly sudden, this, after a silence of several years. And that it so delighted her made her anxious.

She had never imagined love to be like that. Would she also like it so? She found with anguish that she would.

And so she punished both herself and him by writing a stern answer. It was morals, morals, it was nothing but morals. She was proud when she had written it. She did not deny that she loved him, but perhaps Gaetano would not be able to find the love words, they were so embedded in admonition. Nor must he have found them. He wrote no more letters.

But Donna Micaela could now no longer think of

Gaetano as a protection and support. He was now more dangerous than the men from the inland.

And with each day came sadder tidings to Diamante. Now all commenced to procure weapons. And although it was forbidden to own them, they were nevertheless carried secretly by everybody.

All tourists departed from the island, and, instead, troops by the thousand were sent there from Italy.

The socialists talked and talked. They were indeed possessed with an evil spirit, and were not contented unless they called forth adversity!

Finally the insurrectionists had set the day when the storm should break loose. All Sicily, all Italy would rise. It was no longer threats only, it was reality.

More and more troops came from the mainland, and the greater part of them were Neapolitans, who live in constant warfare with the Sicilians. And now came tidings that the island had been put outside the law. There would be no courts of justice any more, only court-martials. And the people said that the soldiers would have liberty to plunder and murder as much as they liked.

No one knew what was going to happen. Terror seemed to make all mad. In Diamante the men stood in groups at the market-place, they stood there day after day, without going to work. It was depressing to see these groups of men, standing there in their dark mantles and slouch-hats. No doubt they stood there dreaming of the moment when they should be permitted to plunder the summer palace.

As the day drew near on which the insurrection

would break out, Don Ferrante became worse. And Donna Micaela feared that he would die.

It seemed to her a sign that her destruction was predetermined, that she should lose Don Ferrante too. Who would have any regard for her when he was dead ?

She watched over him. She and all the women of the neighborhood sat around the bed in silent prayer.

But one morning, towards six o'clock, Don Ferrante died. And Donna Micaela mourned for him because he had been her only protector, and the only one who could have saved her from ruin, and she wished to honor death according to the custom still in vogue in Diamante.

She covered the walls of the death-chamber with black cloth, closed all the shutters to prevent the glad sunlight from entering the rooms.

All fire on the hearth was extinguished, and she sent word to a blind singer to come to the palace daily, and sing dirges.

She left Giannita to take care of Cavaliere Palmeri, that she herself might sit in the death-chamber among the women who had hastened thither.

It was towards evening of the day of death, when all preparations were ended, and one only waited for the white brotherhood to come and take away the body. In the room where the dead body lay it was deathly still. All the women of the quarter sat there motionless, with tear-stained faces.

Donna Micaela, in her great anguish, sat staring involuntarily at the pall spread out over the body. It was a pall belonging to the family; the family

arms, of enormous size, were gaudily embroidered in the middle, and it had silver fringes and heavy tassels. This pall had never been spread over any other than an Alagona. It seemed to lie there in order that Donna Micaela might not for a moment forget that her last support had fallen, and that now she was alone and without protection among the raging people.

Some one now entered and announced that the old Assunta had come. What could old Assunta want? Oh, yes! she was eulogist; it was customary to have her speak of the dead.

Donna Micaela permitted Assunta to enter the room. She came just as she was every day, as she sat begging on the cathedral steps, the same patched dress and the same faded head-cloth, and the same cane.

Small, and with bent back, she limped over to the coffin. She had a shriveled face and failing eyes. Donna Micaela said to herself that it was helplessness and impotency that had entered the room.

Old Assunta lifted her voice and began speaking in the name of the wife.

"My husband is dead, and I am alone. He that raised me to his rank is dead. How extraordinary, is it not, that my home has lost its master? Why are your shutters closed? the passers-by ask.—I answer: I cannot bear to see the light, because my sorrow is great, my sorrow is threefold.—What, are there so many of your family borne away by the white ones?—No, no one of my family is dead, but I have lost my husband, my husband, my husband!"

It was not necessary for the aged Assunta to say any more. Donna Micaela broke out into sobs, and all the women joined in filling the room with lamentations. For no grief is like that of losing one's husband. The widows remembered what they had lost, and they who still had husbands thought of the time when they should no longer stir on the street because no man accompanied them, when they would be left to loneliness, poverty and oblivion, when they would be of no importance, when they would be of the world's outcasts, because they had no longer a husband, because nothing gave them a right to live any more.

. . . . . .

It was towards the end of December, during the days between Christmas and New Year.

There was still the same fear of an insurrection, and one still heard the same alarming reports. It was told that Falco Falcone had collected a band of robbers in the quarry, and that he was only waiting for the day fixed upon for the insurrection to fall upon Diamante and plunder it.

It was also told that in several of the small mountain hamlets the people had rebelled, torn down the custom stations at the city gates, and driven the officers away. The troops, it was said, marched from city to city, arresting doubtful persons and shooting them down by the hundred.

Everybody said that one must fight. One could not allow one's self to be murdered by those Italians without making resistance.

Meanwhile Donna Micaela sat, chained to her father's bedside, just as she had sat by Don Fer-

rante's before. She could not flee from Diamante, and her anguish increased so that she was nothing but trembling fear.

The last and hardest of all sad tidings that had reached her had been about Gaetano.

For when Don Ferrante had been dead only a week Gaetano had come home. And this had by no means dismayed her, but made her happy. She had rejoiced at having at last some one near who could protect her.

At the same time she decided not to receive Gaetano at all, if he came to see her. She felt that she still belonged to the dead one. She would rather not see Gaetano until after a year.

But when Gaetano had been home a week without coming to the summer palace she asked Giannita about him. "Where is Gaetano. Perhaps he has gone again, as no one speaks of him?"

"Oh, Micaela," answered Giannita, "the less said of Gaetano the better for him."

She then told Donna Micaela, as though it were a great scandal she was telling, that Gaetano had become a socialist.

"He has become totally changed over there in England," she said. "He no longer worships either God or the saints. He does not kiss the rector's hand when he meets him. He tells everybody not to pay toll any more at the city-gate. He exhorts the peasants not to pay their rents. He has weapons with him. He has come home for the purpose of starting the insurrection and helping the brigands."

It was not necessary to say any more, to fill Donna

Micaela with greater anguish than she had ever felt before.

This was what the qualmy days of the autumn had foreboded. And to think that it should be just he, who shook down the lightning from the clouds. Why had she not expected this long ago!

This was chastisement and revenge! To think that he should be the one to usher in misfortune.

For the last days she had been calmer. She had heard that all the socialists round about the island had been imprisoned. And all the small flames of rebellion ignited in the mountain hamlets had been quelled. It had almost looked as if the insurrection would come to naught.

But now the last Alagona was come, and him the people would follow. There would be commotion among the dark groups at the market-place. The men in the linen-clothes would cross Simeto. Falco Falcone's robber band would climb up out of the quarry.

. . . . . .

The next evening Gaetano was at the market-place. He had been sitting by the well watching the people coming to get water. For two years he had had to deny himself the pleasure of seeing the slender maidens lift the heavy water-jars on their heads and walk away with steady, solemn steps.

But it was not the young maidens alone, who came to the well, but people of all ages. And when he saw how poor and wretched most of them were, he began to talk to them of the future. He promised them that the times would soon be better. He told the aged Assunta, that hereafter she should have

her daily bread without being obliged to beg for it. And when she said that she did not see how that could ever be, he asked her, almost in anger, if she did not know that the time had now come, when no children and none advanced in years should be without home and protection.

He pointed to the old chair-maker, who was just as poor as Assunta, and, besides, very sick, and he asked if she thought that one could endure any longer to have neither almshouse nor hospital?

He also saw some children, who he knew lived mostly on cresses and sorrels, which they gathered near the river banks and at the edge of the road, and he promised that hereafter no one should need to hunger. He placed his hand on the children's heads and declared, as proudly as though he had been prince of Diamante, that they should no more lack bread.

He said they knew nothing in Diamante; they were ignorant, they understood not that a new and blessed time had come, they believed that this misery would go on continually.

While he thus comforted the poor, more and more people had collected around him, and suddenly he sprang up and, placing himself on the curb, began to speak.

How could they be so foolish, he said, not to believe that better times were coming. Would the people, who owned the whole earth, be content that the aged were left to starve and the little children were permitted to grow up to be criminals and wretches?

Didn't they know that the mountains and seas

abounded with treasures? Had they never heard that the earth was rich? Did they think that she could not feed her children?

They should not murmur amongst themselves and say that it was impossible to arrange things differently. They should not believe that there must be rich and poor. Ah, they knew nothing, they knew not their mother earth. Did they think she hated any one of them? Had they then laid down on the ground and heard the earth speak? Had they seen her write laws? Had they heard her pronounce sentence? Had she commanded some to starve and some to perish from too good living?

Why did they not lift up their ears and listen to the new doctrines passing through the world? Didn't they wish to be better off? Were they then fond of their rags? Were they content with cresses and sorrels? Would they not like to own a roof over their heads?

And he said that it mattered not at all if they refused to believe in the new time arising. It would come to them nevertheless. It was not necessary for them to lift the sun out of the sea in the morning, was it? The new era would come to them as the sun came, but why didn't they wish to be one of the party to meet it? Why did they shut themselves up, afraid of the new light?

He continued long in this manner, and more and more of the poor people in Diamante gathered around him.

But the longer he talked, the clearer became his voice.

There was fire in his clear eyes, and to the people

gazing up at him he seemed as beautiful as a young prince.

He was like one of the ancient, potent gentlemen of his race who had had power to bestow riches and happiness upon all the people in his wide domain. They believed him when he said that he could give them happiness. They felt comforted and glad that their young master loved them.

When he had finished speaking, they broke out into exultation, crying that they would follow him and do what he commanded.

He had gained supremacy over them in a single moment. He was so beautiful, so glorious, that they were unable to withstand him. And his belief was such, that it charmed and subjugated them.

That night there was not a single poor person in Diamante, who did not believe that Gaetano would bestow upon him untroubled happy days. That night they read the blessing over him, all who lived in sheds and out-houses. That night the hungry went to rest firmly believing that the next day tables loaded with good things would be spread before them, when they awoke.

For when Gaetano spoke, his power was such that he could convince the aged that they were young, and the cold that they were warm. And one felt that what he promised must come.

He was monarch of the new era. His hands were benevolent, and miracles and blessings would descend upon Diamante, now that he had returned.

. . . . . .

The next day, towards sunset, Giannita came into the sick-room and whispered to Donna Micaela.

"Insurrection has broken out in Paterno! They have been shooting for several hours and it can be heard here. Troops have already been sent for to Catania. And Gaetano says it will break out here too. He says it will break out in all the Etna cities at the same time."

Donna Micaela made a sign to Giannita to remain with her father, and she went herself across the street and into Donna Elisa's shop.

Donna Elisa sat behind the counter at her frame," but she did not work. The tears fell fast and heavy, so that she was obliged to cease embroidering.

"Where is Gaetano?" said Donna Micaela wholly without circumlocution. "I must speak with him!"

"God grant you may have luck in speaking with him," answered Donna Elisa. "He is in the garden."

She crossed the courtyard and passed into the walled garden.

In the garden were numerous paths, running narrow and winding from terrace to terrace. There were also many arbors and grottos and resting-places. And the stiff agaves and dense dwarf palms and glossy-leafed rubber plants and rhododendrons stood so close that one could not see two steps ahead. Donna Micaela wandered long in these countless paths, before she could find Gaetano. And the longer she walked, the more impatient she grew.

Finally she found him farthest down in the garden. She saw him on the lowest terrace, built out on one of the bastions of the city wall. There sat Gaetano quietly, and, with chisel and hammer, working

on a statuette. When he caught sight of Donna Micaela he hastened towards her with outstretched hands.

She scarcely gave herself time to greet him. "Is it true," she said, "that you have come home to ruin us?" He commenced to laugh. "The syndic has been here," he said. "The rector has been here. And now do you come too?"

It wounded her that he laughed and spoke of the rector and the syndic. Surely her coming was of greater importance.

"Will you tell me?" she said coldly, "if it is true, that there will be an insurrection here to-night?"—"O, no," he answered, "there'll be no insurrection." And he said this in such a tone that she almost pitied him.

"You cause Donna Elisa much sorrow," she burst out.—"And you too, perhaps?" he said with a slight sneer. "I give you all a great deal of trouble. I am the last son. I am Judas. I am the chastening angel who drives you out of this paradise where one eats grass."

She answered: "Perhaps we consider that that which is, is better than to be shot down by the soldiers." "Certainly, it is better to starve to death. One is used to that."—"But it is not at all pleasant to be murdered by the bandits."—"Then why in the world are the bandits allowed to exist, if one does not wish to be murdered by them?"—"Well, I know very well," she said, still more vehemently, "that you wish that the rich should all be destroyed."

He did not answer immediately, but stood biting his lip in order not to get excited. "Let me

talk with you, Donna Micaela!" he said at last. "Let me explain to you!"

At the same moment he put on a patient expression. He talked socialism to her, so plain and simple that a child ought to have understood.

Nevertheless she was far from following him. She might have been able perhaps, but she did not want to. Just then she did not wish to hear of socialism.

The sight of him had had such a marvelous effect upon her. The ground had commenced to tremble under her. And something sublime and blissful had passed through her and enraptured her. "O God, it is he that I love," she said to herself. "It is really he."

Before she saw him, she had known very well what she should say to him. She should have led him back to his childhood's faith. She should have shown him that this new doctrine was detestable and awful. But then love came. That made her confused and stupid. She could answer him nothing. She only sat and felt astonished that he could talk.

She wondered if he now was much handsomer than formerly. Before she had not become so bewildered at all, when she had seen him. She had never felt so completely carried away. Or was it this, that now he had become a free, strong man? She became frightened when she felt how he mastered her.

She dared not contradict him. She did not even dare to speak for fear of bursting out into tears. Had she dared to speak, she would not have talked politics. She would have told him what she had experienced the day when the bells rang. Or she would have begged to be allowed to kiss his hand,

She would have liked to tell him how she had dreamed of him. She would have said that had she not had him to dream of, life would have been unendurable. She would have begged to be allowed to kiss his hand out of gratitude, because he had given her life during all these years.

If there was to be no insurrection why did he talk socialism? What did socialism concern them, who sat there alone in Donna Elisa's old garden? She sat gazing along one of the garden paths. Luca had put up wooden arches on both sides of it, and up these garlands of delicate rose shoots full of buds and flowers now twined. One always wondered where this little path would lead when one followed it. And one arrived at a little weather-beaten Cupid. Old Luca had more sense about things than Gaetano.

While they sat there, the sun went down, and Etna became rose-hued. It was as if Etna had blushed in indignation at what was passing in Donna Elisa's garden. It was at sunset, when Etna grew brilliantly red, that she had been wont to think of Gaetano. It was as if they both had expected him. And both of them had seen clearly how it would be when Gaetano came. She had only feared that he would be too passionate and violent. And now he only talked of these terrible socialists, whom she detested and feared.

He spoke long. She saw how Etna paled and became bronze-brown, and then came the darkness. She knew it would be moonlight. She sat there perfectly still, hoping for help from the moonlight. She herself could do nothing. She was completely in his power. But when the moonlight came, that

did not help either. He continued to speak of capitalists and laborers.

It then seemed to her, that there could be but one explanation to all this. He must have ceased to love her.

Suddenly she remembered something. It was a week ago. It was the same day Gaetano had come home. She had entered Giannita's room, but she had walked so quietly that Giannita had not heard her.

She had then seen Giannita stand as if in rapture, with outstretched arms and uplifted face. And between her hands she held a portrait. Now she carried it to her lips and kissed it, now she raised it above her head and gazed at it in ecstasy. And the portrait had been Gaetano's.

When Donna Micaela had seen this, she had retreated as quietly as she had come and had then only thought that Giannita was to be pitied, if she loved Gaetano. But now, when Gaetano only talked socialism, now she remembered it.

And now she began to believe that also Gaetano loved Giannita. She called to mind that they were childhood friends. Perhaps he had loved her long. He had perhaps come home to marry her. Donna Micaela could not say anything, she had nothing to complain of. It was hardly a month since she had written to Gaetano that it was wrong of him to love her.

He now leaned towards her, compelled her to look at him and listen to what he said.

"You must understand, you must see and understand, Donna Micaela. What we need down here

in the south is a regeneracy, a revival, such as Christianity was in its time. Up with the slaves, down with the masters! A plow that turns up new social layers! We must sow in fresh soil, the old is impoverished. The old surface layers bear only a feeble wretched vegetation. Let the under soil come up in the light, and you will see something different!

"Behold, Donna Micaella, why does socialism flourish why has that not foundered? Because it comes with a new word. 'Think of the earth,' it says, just as Christianity said: 'Think of heaven.' Look around you! Look at the earth, is not that all we possess? Let us then arrange ourselves here in such a way, that we become happy. Why, why has no one thought of that before? Because we have busied ourselves so much with that which is to come hereafter. Let us get rid of that 'hereafter!' The earth, the earth, Donna Micaela! Ah, we socialists, we love her! We worship the sacred earth, the poor despised mother, who wears mourning because her children wish to ascend into heaven.

"Believe me, Donna Micaela," he said, "it will be done within seven years. When the year nineteen hundred dawns it will be ready. Martyrs will then have bled, apostles will then have preached, then will throng after throng have yielded. We, earth's true sons, shall own the victory. And she will unfold to us all her sweetness. She will yield us beauty, yield us enjoyment, yield us learning, yield us health."

Gaetano's voice began to falter, and tears quivered in his eyes. He walked to the verge of the terrace and stretched out his arms as if to embrace the

moonlit earth. "You are so dazzlingly beautiful," he said, "so dazzlingly beautiful."

And for a moment it seemed to Donna Micaela that she could feel his distress over all the anguish groveling beneath that beauteous exterior. She saw life with its vice and suffering as a filthy pond, full of rank impurities, winding along through this glittering world of beauty.

"And no one may enjoy thee," said Gaetano, "no one dares to enjoy these. Thou art untamed and full of caprice and wickedness. Thou art insecurity and danger, thou art remorse and agony, thou art want and shame, thou art all that is horrible because the people have not wished to make thee better. But thy day will come," he said triumphantly. "They will one day turn to thee with all their love. They will not turn to a dream which is powerless to help."

She interrupted him abruptly. She began to fear him more and more.

"It is true then, that you have not been successful in England?"

"What do you mean?"

"It is said that the great master to whom Miss Tottenham sent you has said that you . . ."

"What has he said?"

"That you and your images were fit for Diamante, but nowhere else."

"Who says such things?"

"One believes it, since you are so changed."

"Because I am a socialist now?"

"Why should you be that, if you have had success?"

"Ah, why . . . ? You do not know," he continued, laughing, "that my master in England was a socialist himself. You do not know that it is he who has introduced these ideas to me . . ."

He checked himself and did not continue the controversy. He went over to the bench, where he had been sitting when she came, and fetched a statuette. He handed it to Donna Micaela. It seemed as though he wished to say: "See for yourself, if you are right."

She took it and held it up in the moonlight. It was a Mater Dolorosa in black marble. She saw it quite distinctly.

She could also recognize it. The image bore her own features. It intoxicated her for a moment. The next she was filled with horror. He who was a socialist, he, who did not believe, he dared to make a Madonna! And he had given the image her features. He involved her in his sin.

"I have made it for you, Donna Micaela," he said.

Ah, since it was hers! She threw it out over the balustrade. It hit against the steep wall of rock, fell deeper and deeper, struck loose stones and was probably itself dashed to pieces. Finally a splash was heard down in the Simeto.

"By what right do you carve Madonnas?" she asked Gaetano.

He stood silent. He had never before seen Donna Micaela like that.

At the same moment that she rose against him, she had become tall and stately. Beauty, which with her always came and went like a restless guest,

now sat enthroned upon her face. She looked cold and unbending, a woman, tempting to win and conquer.

"You believe in God then, since you carve Madonnas?" she said.

He breathed hard. Now it was he that was paralyzed. He had been a believer himself. He knew how he had wounded her. He saw that he had forfeited her love. He had placed an endless formidable chasm between them.

He must speak, he must win her over to his side.

He began again but feebly and stutteringly.

She listened quietly awhile. Then interrupted him almost compassionately.

"How did you become like that?"

"I thought of Sicily," he said passively.

"You thought of Sicily," she repeated thoughtfully. "And why did you come home?"

"I came home to rebel."

It was as though they had talked of a sickness, a cold, which he had contracted, and which could easily be cured.

"You came home to ruin us," she said sternly.

"As you wish, as you wish," he said complaisantly, "You may call it so. As everything now goes, you probably are right in calling it so. Ah, if one had not given me wrong information, if I had not come one week too late! Is it not like us Sicilians to allow the government to baffle us? When I came, the chiefs were already arrested, the island occupied by forty thousand men! All lost!"

It sounded strangely desolate within him, when he said this "All lost." And for this, of which nothing

could have come, he had wasted his happiness. His ideas and principles seemed to him now dry spider-webs, which had caught him. He wanted to extricate himself in order to reach her. She alone was reality, the only thing that was his. Thus he had felt of yore. It came back to him now. She was all he had in the world.

"Nevertheless they fight in Paterno to-day."

"There's been a brawl at the city-gate," he said. "That's nothing. Had I been able to set fire to the whole of Etna, to the whole wreath of cities encircling Etna, then, perhaps, we had been understood. One would have listened to us. Now only a lot of peasants are shot down to lessen the number of hungry mouths. Not a single concession is made us."

He pulled at his spider-web. Should he dare to approach her, tell her that all this was of no consequence to him? What need had he to think of politics? He was an artist, he was free. And he wanted her.

At that moment the air seemed to vibrate. A shot rang through the night, then one more, so another.

She came up to him and seized his wrist. "Is this the insurrection?" she asked. Shot after shot boomed. Then was heard the cries and clamor of a crowd of people rushing down the street.

"It's the insurrection, it must be the insurrection! Ah, long live socialism!"

He was filled with exultation. All his faith in his cause came back. Her too, he would win. Women have never refused to belong to the victor.

Without a word further the two hurried through

the garden to the portal. There Gaetano began to swear and shout. He could not get out. There was no key in the lock. He was shut up in the garden.

He looked round. On three sides were high walls, on the fourth was the precipice. There was no way out. But from the city a frightful uproar was heard. People rushed back and forth, there were shots and cries! And above all were heard their yells of: "Long live liberty, long live socialism!" He threw himself against the portal, and he too almost howled. He was caught. He could not join them.

Donna Micaela came up to him as speedily as she could. Now, after she had heard him, she thought no more of keeping him back.

"Wait! Wait!" she said. "It is I who have taken the key."

"You, you!" he said.

"I took it when I came. It occurred to me that I could keep you locked in here, should you want to rebel. I wished to save you."

"What folly!" he said, snatching the key.

While he stood groping after the key-hole, he still had time to say something.

"Why will you not save me now?"

She did not answer.

"Perhaps because your God would then have an opportunity to destroy me."

She continued silent.

"Dare you not protect me from his anger?"

"No, I dare not," she said softly.

"You believers are terrible," he said.

He felt that she cast him off. That she did not make one effort to induce him to stay took away his

courage. He turned the key forth and back without being able to open. She standing there behind him, pale and cold, paralyzed him.

Suddenly he felt her arms about his neck and her lips seeking his.

Just then the portal flew open, and he rushed away. He did not want her kisses, which only consecrated him to death. To him she was ghostly in her old faith. He dashed away like a fugitive.

XI

THE FEAST OF SAN SEBASTIANO

WHEN Gaetano had rushed away, Donna Micaela remained standing in Donna Elisa's garden a long time. She stood there completely paralyzed and could neither feel nor think.

At last it occurred to her that Gaetano and she were not the only ones in the world. She remembered her father, lying ill, and whom she had forgotten for so many hours.

She went through the portal, out on the Corso, which lay deserted and empty. Noise and shots could still be heard far away, and she said to herself that there must be fighting down by Porta Etnea.

The façade of the summer palace lay bathed in the bright moonlight, and it surprised her, that at this time of night the balcony doors were open and that the blinds were not closed. She wondered still more that both the portal and shop-door stood wide open.

As she passed through the archway, she did not there see Piero, the old porter. The lantern in the court was not lit, and there was not a person to be seen anywhere.

She ascended the steps to the gallery, and her foot hit against something hard. It was a small bronze vase, which belonged in the music-room. A few steps farther up she found a knife. It was a case-knife with

long, dagger-like blade. As she lifted it up several dark drops trickled down the edge. She understood it must be blood.

And likewise she understood that what she had feared the whole autumn, had now happened. The brigands had been in the summer-palace to plunder. And all there, who had been able to fly, had done so, but her father, who could not rise from his bed, must now be murdered.

It was impossible for her to know whether the robbers were not still in the house. Now, however, when she was in the midst of the greatest danger, her fear vanished, and she hurried on, without stopping to consider that she was alone and defenseless.

She passed through the gallery and entered the music-salon. In there the moonlight fell in broad streaks on the floor and in one of these streaks a human being lay outstretched.

Donna Micaela bent down over this motionless form. It was Giannita. She was murdered, she had a deep gaping wound in the throat.

Donna Micaela laid the body to rights, crossed the hands over the breast, and closed the eyes. In doing this, blood came on her hands, and when she felt this warm, sticky blood, she began to cry. "Ah, my kind, beloved sister," she said. "Your young life has passed away with this blood. Through your whole life you have loved me, and now you have shed your blood in defending my house. Is it to punish my hardness of heart, that God has taken you away from me? Is it because I grudged your loving my beloved, who has now departed from me? Ah, sister, sister, could you not punish me less severely?"

She bent forward and kissed the forehead of the dead. "You do not believe it," she said. "You know that I have always been faithful to you. You know that I have loved you."

She now remembered that the dead one was parted from all that was earthly, and that it was not repentance or assurances of friendship that she needed. And she repeated a few prayers over the body, since the only thing she could do for her sister was to support by pious thoughts, the fleeting spirit in its flight up to God.

Then she walked on, not afraid of anything that might happen to herself, but in unutterable anguish over what might have befallen her father.

When she had finally traversed the spacious salons and stood by the door to the sick-chamber, her hands groped long after the lock, and, having found it, she had no strength to open it.

Her father then called from within, asking who it was. When she heard his voice, and knew that he was alive, she felt as though all within her trembled and gave way and lost the power of serving her. Both heart and brain failed her at the same time, and the muscles could no longer support her. She was still able to think that this was due to her having lived in such terrible suspense. And with a singular feeling of deliverance she sank into a long swoon.

Donna Micaela regained consciousness towards morning. Much had then happened. The servants had come forth from their hiding places, and gone for Donna Elisa. She had taken charge of the deserted palace, had sent after police and a message to

the white brotherhood. And these had carried Giannita's body to her mother's house.

When Donna Micaela awoke, she found herself lying on a sofa in a room outside her father's. No one was with her, but in there she heard Donna Elisa talking.

" My son and my daughter," said Donna Elisa, sobbing, " I have lost both my son and my daughter."

Donna Micaela tried to rise, but could not. Her body was still in a dormant state, though her soul had awaked.

" Cavaliere, Cavaliere," said Donna Elisa, " can you understand this? Here come brigands from Etna stealing into Diamante. Here come brigands firing at the custom-house and crying: ' Long live socialism.' And this they do only to frighten the people away from the street and to entice the carabineers down to Porta Etnea. There is not one man in Diamante who is a party to this. It is the brigands who create all the disturbance, to get a chance to plunder Miss Tottenham and Donna Micaela, plunder two women, Cavaliere! What have those gentlemen officers believed, who held court-martial? Have they believed that Gaetano was in league with the brigands? Didn't they see that he was a gentleman, a genuine Alagona, an artist? How were they capable of sentencing him?"

Donna Micaela listened in consternation, but she endeavored to persuade herself that she was still dreaming. She fancied she could hear Gaetano asking if she were sacrificing him to God? And it seemed to her she answered that she did. Now she dreamed of how it would be, in case he had actually

been taken prisoner. It could not be anything else.

"What evil night is this?" said Donna Elisa. "What is it flying about through the air making the people bewildered and desperate? You have seen Gaetano, Cavaliere. He has always, to be sure, been impetuous and high-spirited, but he has not been devoid of sense. Yet this night he rushes straight into the arms of the troops. You know that he wanted to rebel, you know that he had come home for the purpose of rebelling. And when he hears the shooting and the cries of 'Long live socialism!' he becomes wild and giddy. He says to himself that it is the insurrection, and he rushes down the street to join in it, crying 'Long live socialism' with all his might. And so he meets a great number of soldiers, a whole army. For they were on their way to Paterno, but heard the shooting in Diamante, and marched in here to see what the matter was. And Gaetano is no longer able to distinguish a soldier's cap. He believes it is the insurrectionists, he believes it is the angels of heaven, and he rushes in amongst them and lets them take him prisoner. And these who before have captured all the brigands, as they stole away with their plunder, now also lay hands on Gaetano. They pass through the city and find everything quiet, but before departing they pronounce sentence upon their prisoners. And Gaetano receives the same sentence as those who have committed burglary and murdered women. Have they not lost their senses, Cavaliere?"

Donna Micaela could not hear what her father answered. She herself wanted to ask a thousand

questions, but she was still petrified and could not move. She wondered if Gaetano had been shot.

"What do they mean by sentencing him to twenty-nine years imprisonment?" said Donna Elisa. "Do they think that he will be able to live so long, or that any one who loves him will live so long? He is dead, Cavaliere, dead to me as is Giannita."

Donna Micaela felt as though she were bound by strong fetters, in order that she might not escape. This was worse, she thought, than if she had been tied to a pillory and whipped.

"All the happiness of my old age is taken from me," said Donna Elisa. "Both Giannita and Gaetano! I have always looked forward to their marrying each other. It would have been such a suitable match, because both were my children and loved me. What have I now to live for, when I have no youth around me? It was often hard to make ends meet at the time when Gaetano came to me, and I was told that I should be better off were I alone. But I answered: 'It matters not to me, so long as I may have youth around me.' And I thought that when he grew up, he would take to himself a young wife, and they would have little children, and I should never need to be a lonely, useless, old woman."

Donna Micaela lay thinking that she might have saved Gaetano, but had not wished to do so. But why had she not wished to do it? It seemed inconceivable to her now. She began to enumerate all the reasons she had had for allowing him to rush headlong to destruction. He was an atheist and socialist, and he wanted to aid the insurrectionists. And that had outweighed everything else, when she had

opened the garden-gate for him! It had also weighed up her love. She did not understand it, now. It was as if scales full of feathers could have weighed up scales full of gold.

"My handsome boy!" said Donna Elisa, "my handsome boy! He was already a great man over there in England, and he came home to help us poor Sicilians. And now they have sentenced him as though he were a bandit. It is said they came near shooting him, like the rest. Perhaps it had been better had they done so, Cavaliere. It had been better to have laid him to rest in the churchyard than to know him in prison. How will he be able to endure all his suffering? He cannot bear it, he will be sick, he will soon be dead."

As she said this, Donna Micaela tore herself loose from her stupor and rose. She staggered through the room and came in to her father and Donna Elisa, as deathly pale as the poor murdered Giannita. She was so weak, that she dared not enter, but remained standing by the door, supporting herself against the doorpost.

"It is I, Donna Elisa," she said; "it is I. . ."

The words would not pass her lips. She clenched her hands in despair at not being able to speak.

In a moment Donna Elisa was by her side. She laid her arm about her for support without heeding Donna Micaela's attempts to push her away.

"You must forgive me, Donna Elisa," she said almost inaudibly. "I have done it."

Donna Elisa paid very little attention to what she said. She saw that she had fever and thought she was delirious.

Donna Micaela's lips worked, and it was evident that she wished to say something, but only a few words were audible. It was impossible to understand what she meant. "Towards him as towards my father," she repeated again and again. And then she said something about her causing the ruin of all those she loved.

Donna Elisa had got her into a chair, and there Donna Micaela fell to kissing her old wrinkled hands and begging her to forgive what she had done.

Of course Donna Elisa forgave her.

Donna Micaela looked her sharply in the face with great feverish eyes and asked if it were true.

Of course it was true.

She then laid her head on Donna Elisa's shoulder and wept, and afterwards she thanked her, saying that she could not live if she did not forgive her. Against no one had she so sinned as against her. Could she forgive her?

Donna Elisa said, "Yes, yes," again and again, believing that she raved in consequence of fever and fright.

"There is something I would like to tell you," said Donna Micaela. "I know it, but you do not. You won t forgive me, if you are told it."

"I do indeed forgive you," said Donna Elisa.

They continued long in this way without understanding each other, but that night it was well for old Donna Elisa to have something to mother and comfort and give strengthening herbs and medicines. It was well for her that there was still some one, who came and laid her head against her shoulder and wept over her sorrow.

. . . . . .

Donna Micaela, who for nearly three years had loved Gaetano, without a thought that they should ever belong to each other, had accustomed herself to a peculiar kind of love. It sufficed her to know that Gaetano loved her. When she thought of that, a delicious feeling of security would steal over her. "What matters it, what matters it?" she would say, when she experienced reverses. "Gaetano loves me." He was always with her, encouraging and comforting her. He lived in all her thoughts and doings. He was the breath of life itself to her.

As soon as Donna Micaela could procure his address, she wrote to him. She then confessed to him that she had a firm belief that he would meet with misfortune. But she had feared so much for that which he would accomplish in the world that she dared not save him.

She also wrote how she abhorred his doctrines. She did not dissemble at all. She said, that even if he were free, she could not become his.

She feared him. He had such a power over her, that were they to become united, he would make her a socialist and atheist. Therefore she must always live separated from him, in order to save her soul.

But she begged and entreated him, that in spite of all this, he would not cease to love her. He must not, he must not! He might punish her, in any way whatsoever, only he did not cease to love her.

He must not do as her father had done. It was perhaps no more than right that he too now closed his heart against her; nevertheless he must not do it. He must be merciful.

If he knew how she loved him, if he knew how she dreamed of him!

And she told him that he was nothing less than life itself to her.

"Must I die, Gaetano?" she asked.

"It is not enough, then, that these ideas and doctrines separate us. It is not enough, that they have sent you to prison. Will you also cease to love me because we do not think alike?"

"Ah, Gaetano, love me! nothing will come of it, there's no hope in your love, but love me! I shall die if you do not love me."

Donna Micaela had no sooner mailed this letter, than she began to expect an answer. She imagined she would get an angry, stormy letter in return. She hoped, however, that there would be one word at least, which proved that he still loved her.

But she waited several weeks without receiving any letter from Gaetano.

It did not help that every morning she stood out on the gallery waiting for the postman, and made him almost sad to be obliged always to say that he had nothing for her.

One day she went herself to the post-office and begged with the most beseeching eyes, to have that letter she was expecting. It surely must be there, she said. But perhaps they could not read the address, perhaps it had got into a wrong box? And her soft imploring eyes moved the postmaster so that she was allowed to search through piles of old letters not called for and turn all the post-office drawers upside down. But it availed nothing.

She also wrote new letters to Gaetano; but still no answer came.

Then she began to try to believe what seemed to her impossible. She tried to initiate into her soul the consciousness that Gaetano had ceased to love her.

As this certainty increased she began to lock herself in her room. She became afraid of people and preferred solitude.

Day by day she grew weaker. She walked deeply bowed, and even her beautiful eyes seemed to lose life and luster.

After a few weeks she grew so weak that she could no longer hold herself upright, but was obliged to lie all day on a sofa. She was a prey to an ailment which slowly took away from her all vitality. She saw that she was nearing death, and she feared to die. But there was nothing for her to do. There was but one remedy. That, however, did not come.

While Donna Micaela thus slowly seemed to glide out of life, preparations were being made in Diamante to celebrate the feast of San Sebastiano, which comes towards the end of January.

It was the greatest of all feasts celebrated in Diamante, but during the last years it had not been observed with the usual display, because too great distress and gloom had oppressed the minds of the people.

But this year, immediately after the insurrection had failed, and while Sicily was still filled with strange troops, and while the beloved heroes of the people languished in prison, it was proposed to keep the feast with old-fashioned pomp, because this, it was said, was not the time to neglect the saints.

And the pious people of Diamante decided that the feast should be held one week, and that San Sebastiano should be celebrated by a display of colors and decorations, and by races, and a biblical procession, and illuminations and song competition.

So they set about with great bustle and zeal. In every house was scrubbing and polishing. The old procession clothes were taken out and preparations were made to receive guests from all Etna.

The only house in Diamante where all was quiet was the summer-palace. Donna Elisa was deeply grieved over this, but she could not persuade Donna Micaela to allow her house to be decorated. "How can you ask that I should decorate such a house of sorrow with flowers and greens?" she said. "The roses would shed their petals, were I to use them to conceal the misery which reigns here."

But Donna Elisa was wholly wrapped up in the feast, and expected that much good would come of celebrating the saints as in former days. She talked of nothing else, save how the priests were having the façade of the cathedral decorated in the old Sicilian fashion, with silver flowers and mirrors. And she described the festive procession. There would be so many horsemen, and the plumes in their hats would be so high, and so long, and they would carry flower-twined canes with wax candles at the top in their hands.

The first feast-day found Donna Elisa's house decorated most gorgeously. One saw there Italy's green white and red flag fluttering from the roof, and red gold-fringed banners with the Saint's monograms were spread out over window-sills and balcony rails.

And up and down the walls ran garlands of holy-oak, and round the windows crept wreaths bound of the small pink roses from Donna Elisa's garden. Right above the entrance was the image of the saint, framed in lilies, and on the threshold lay sprays of cypress. And had one entered the house one would have found it as beautifully adorned inside as outside. From attic to cellar, it was cleansed and polished and decked with flowers, and on the shelves of the shop there was not a saint, however small or obscure, that did not have an immortelle, or an English daisy, in its hand.

And along the whole street of poor little Diamante the houses had been decorated in the same manner as Donna Elisa's. There was such a confusion of flags that one thought of the wash-clothes hanging from the earth to the sky in the alley above the little Moor's house. All houses and all triumphal arches had flags, and across the street hung ropes, where streamer beside streamer fluttered.

At every tenth step the people had placed triumphal-arches. And over every portal stood an image of the saint, set in wreaths of yellow immortelles. The balconies were covered with red quilts, and bright colored table-covers, and up the walls climbed stiff garlands.

There was such an abundance of flowers and green that no one could conceive how it had been possible to procure all this as early as January. Everything was wreathed and garlanded. The broomstick wore a wreath of crocuses, and the knocker a bunch of hyacinths. But in the windows stood pictures with monograms and inscriptions of bluish-

red anemones. And between these decorated houses rolled the great stream of people. It was not the inhabitants of Diamante alone, who celebrated San Sebastiano. From all parts of Etna came yellow, gorgeously mounted and painted traps, drawn by horses in ornamented harness and loaded with people. The sick and beggars and blind singers also came in great numbers.

So many people were come, that it was a marvel how all could be accommodated within the city walls. There were people on the street, people in the windows, people on the balconies. On the high stone steps sat people, and the shops were full of them. The large street-doors were thrown wide open, and in the entries chairs were placed in a semicircle as at a theater. There sat the host and hostess and guests watching the passers-by. Everywhere through the whole street there rose an intoxicating clamor. It was not enough that the people talked and laughed. There were also organ-grinders whose organs were of immense size. There were street-singers, and there were men and women, who recited Tasso in shrill, cracked voices. There were all sorts of heralds, from all the churches came peals of music and at the market place, the city band played, so that it could be heard all over Diamante.

This merry clamor and the scent of flowers and fluttering of flags outside Donna Micaela's windows had power to rouse her from her stupor. She rose as if life had summoned her. "I do not wish to die," she said to herself, "I will try to live."

She took her father's arm and went out on the street. She hoped that the life out there would in-

toxicate her, so that she would be able to forget her grief. "If this does not succeed," she thought, "if I cannot find diversion, I must die."

Now in Diamante there was a poor old stonecutter, who had thought that he might earn a couple of soldi during the feast. Therefore he had formed out of lava several little busts of San Sebastiano and of Pope Leo XIII. And knowing that many in Diamante loved Gaetano and grieved over his fate, he also made a few likenesses of him.

No sooner had Donna Micaela come out in the street than she chanced to meet this man, and he asked her to buy his miserable little images.

"Buy Don Gaetano Alagona, Donna Micaela," said the man, "buy Don Gaetano, whom the government have put into prison, because he wished to succor Sicily."

Donna Micaela pressed her father's arm and hurried on.

But in the Café Europa stood the landlord's son and sang canzonets. He had composed some new ones for the occasion, and among others also a couple about Gaetano. Because there was no knowing whether the people would not like particularly to hear about him.

As Donna Micaela was passing the café she heard the singing and stopped to listen.

"Ah, Gaetano, Gaetano," sang the young man. "Songs are powerful. I will sing you free with my songs. First I send you the lithe canzonet. He will glide in between your prison-bars and break them. Then I will send you the sonnet, which is fair as a woman to bribe your keepers. And after

that I'll write you the glorious ode, which will shake your prison walls with its proud rhythms. But should none of these help you I will break forth into the powerful epopee, which possesses armies of words! and like an army marches bravely onward, O Gaetano. All the legions of ancient Rome would not have had power to check it."

During the song Donna Micaela clung convulsively to her father's arm. She said nothing, however, but walked on.

Caveliere Palmeri then began to speak of Gaetano. "I did not know he was so beloved," he said.

"Nor I," murmured Donna Micaela.

"To-day, however, I have seen strange people entering Donna Elisa's shop, begging her to be allowed to buy something, that he had carved. She had nothing left but a couple of old rosaries, and I saw her tear them apart and distribute them, bead after bead."

Donna Micaela looked at her father as a suppliant child. But he did not know whether she wished him to be silent or to continue speaking.

"Donna Elisa's old friends go about down in the garden with Luca," he said, "and Luca shows them Gaetano's favorite spots and the garden-plot which he used to plant. And Pacifica sits in the work-shop beside the planing-bench telling all sorts of things about him, ever since he was so big."

The crush and noise became so great around him that he was obliged to discontinue.

They intended to go to the cathedral. On the steps sat old Assunta as usual. She held a rosary in her hands and muttered the same prayer round

the whole rosary. She begged the saint that Gaeteno, who had promised to help all the poor, should be allowed to return to Diamante.

As Donna Micaela passed her, she heard plainly: "San Sebastiano, give us Gaetano. Ah, for thy mercy's sake, ah, for our misery's sake, San Sebastiano, give us Gaetano!"

Donna Micaela had intended to enter the church, but she turned on the step.

"It is so crowded in there," she said. "I do not dare."

She went home again. But while she had been away, Donna Elisa had availed herself of the opportunity. She had raised a flag on the roof of the summer palace, she had draped the balconies, and when Donna Micaela came home, she was fastening a garland in the portal. For Donna Elisa could not bear that the summer palace was not decorated. There must nothing be lacking this time in San Sebastiano's honor. And she feared that the saint would not help Diamante and Gaetano if the old palace of the Alagonas did not celebrate him.

Donna Micaela came walking along, pale as death, and so bent that she appeared to be eighty years old.

She muttered to herself, "I make him no busts, I sing no songs about him, I dare not pray to God for him, I buy none of his beads. How shall he be able to believe that I love him? He must love all these others, who worship him, but not me. I do not belong to his world, me he can no longer love."

And when she saw that another wished to adorn her house with flowers, it seemed to her so horribly

cruel, that she snatched the wreath away from Donna Elisa and threw it at her feet, and asked if she wanted to murder her.

Then she walked by her up the steps and into her room. She threw herself on the sofa and buried her face in the pillows.

Until now she had not understood how these outward conditions separated her from Gaetano. A friend of the people could not love her.

And moreover, she felt as though she had prevented him from aiding all these poor ones.

How he must detest her, how he must hate her!

And her old malady came stealing over her again. This malady which consisted in not being loved! It would murder her. It seemed to her as she lay there, that all was past, all was ended. Suddenly the image of the little Christ-child appeared to her inner vision. It was as if he had entered the room in all his miserable pomp. She saw him plainly.

Donna Micaela began to invoke the Christ-child's aid. And she wondered that she had not before turned to this kind helper. No doubt it was because the image did not stand in a church, but was carried about like an article of curiosity by Miss Tottenham who only remembered him in her severest trials.

. . . . . .

It was late in the evening of the same day. After dinner Donna Micaela had given her servants permission to go to the feast, so that she and her father were alone in the large house. But about ten o'clock her father rose and said, that he would like to hear the song competition at the market-place. And when he went Donna Micaela dared not sit all alone

at home, but had to make up her mind to accompany him.

When they reached the market-place they saw it transformed into a theater with row upon row of chairs. Every nook was filled with people, and it was with difficulty they found room.

"To-night Diamante is grand, Micaela," said Cavaliere Palmeri. It was as if the loveliness of the night had softened him. He spoke more kindly and tenderly to his daughter than he had done for a long time.

Donna Micaela thought that he spoke truly. She had the same feeling as when she came to Diamante for the first time. It was the city of marvels, of beauty, a little sanctuary of God.

Straight before her stood a high and magnificent building, built of luminous diamonds. She was obliged to reflect a moment, before she knew what it was.

However it was nothing but the façade of the cathedral, which had been decorated with flowers of stiff silver and gold paper, and with thousands of small mirrors, stuck in between the flowers. And in every flower hung a small oil-glass with a flame about the size of a firefly. This was very pretty. It was the most enchanting illumination Donna Micaela had seen.

There was no other light in the market-place, and none other was necessary. The black Palazzo Geraci stood there, fiery red, as if it had been illumined by a conflagration.

Nothing of the world was seen but the market-place. Everything beyond was wrapt in darkness.

It seemed to her that she once more recognized the old bewitching Diamante, which was not of the earth but a holy citadel on one of the mountains of heaven. The town-hall with its massive balconies and the high staircase, the long nunnery and the Roman gateway were again marvelous and beautiful. And she could hardly believe that it was in this city she had met with such intense suffering.

In the midst of this great mass of people no cold was felt. The winter night was as warm as a night in spring. And Donna Micaela began to feel something of spring in her heart. It began to tremble and quake within her in a manner both sweet and terrible. So must it feel in Etna's snowcaps when the sun dissolves them into sparkling mountain brooks.

She looked at the people that filled the market-place and was astonished that the sight of them had so tortured her in the morning. It pleased her that they loved Gaetano. Ah, if he had only continued to love her, she would have been unspeakably proud and happy over their love. Then she could have kissed those old rough hands, which made images of him and were folded for him in prayer.

As she sat thinking of this, the church door was thrown open and a large flat wagon covered with red cloth was rolled out of the church. Highest upon the wagon stood San Sebastiano at his pole, and below the image sat the four singers, who were to compete.

It was an old blind man from Nicolosi, a cooper from Catania, who was considered the best improviser in all Sicily, a blacksmith from Termini and the

little Gandolfo, who was the son of the watchman at the town-hall in Diamante.

All the people were astonished that Gandolfo dared to appear in such a critical competition. Did he do it to please his fiancée the little Rosalia? No one had ever heard that he could improvise. All his life he had done nothing but eat oranges and stare at Etna.

First, lots were cast between the competitors, resulting in the cooper's turn coming first and little Gandolfo's last. When the drawing of lots turned out thus, Gandolfo grew pale. It was terrible to be last, when all were to speak on the same subject.

The cooper chose to speak of San Sebastiano when he was legislator in ancient Rome, and on account of his faith was tied to a pole and used as a target by his comrades. After him came the blind man, who related how a pious Roman lady found the martyr, bloody and pierced through with arrows, and succeeded in bringing him back to life. Then came the blacksmith who told about all the miracles San Sebastiano had performed in Sicily during the plague in the year fifteen hundred. They all received a great deal of praise. They all used very strong language about blood and death, and the people were in raptures over them. But the Diamantians became anxious about little Gandolfo.

"The blacksmith takes all the words away from him. He is sure to fail," they said.

Others said, "Ah, little Rosalia will take the betrothal ribbon out of her braid on that account."

But Gandolfo crouched down in his corner of the wagon. He became smaller and smaller. Those

sitting near could hear how his teeth chattered from fright.

Finally when his turn came, and he rose and commenced improvising, he was very deficient. He was worse than any one had expected. He stumbled through a couple of verses, but it was only a repetition of what the others had said.

Then all at once he became silent and gasped for breath. During that moment of hopeless despair he grew suddenly strong. He straightened himself up and a faint color rose to his cheeks.

"O, signori," said Gandolfo, "let me speak of that of which I am always thinking! Let me tell of that which I always see before me!"

And he began to relate freely and with great force what he himself had seen. He told about how he, who was a son of the town-hall keeper, had crept across dark attics and lain hidden in one of the galleries of the court that night, when the court-martial assembled to judge the insurgents in Diamante.

He had then seen Don Gaetano Alagona on the bench of the accused in company with a number of wild fellows, who were worse than brutes.

He told about how handsome Gaetano had been. To Gandolfo he had seemed like a god beside those terrible people around him. And he described these banditti with their beast-like faces, their coarse hair, their uncouth limbs. He said they were such, that to look into their eyes made one's heart quiver.

Yet, in all his beauty, Don Gaetano was more terrible than these people. Gandolfo knew not how they dared to sit beside him on the bench. The withering glances which flashed beneath his knit

brows upon his fellow-prisoners ought to have murdered their souls if, like other beings, they had possessed them.

"Who are you," he seemed to ask, "who dare to take to pillage and murder, while you invoke the blessed freedom. Do you know what you have done? Do you know that because of this scheme of yours I am now a prisoner? And I was to have saved Sicily!" And every glance he cast upon them was a death-warrant.

His eye fell upon all the things the bandits had stolen and which now lay on the table of the court. He recognized them. Should he not know the pendulum-clocks and the silver dishes from the summer palace, should he not know the images of saints and coins, that had been stolen from his English patroness? But when he had recognized these things he gave his fellow-prisoners a ghastly smile. "You heroes, you heroes!" said the smile, "you have robbed two women."

His noble face was constantly changing. Once Gandolfo had seen it contract from sudden terror. It was when the man sitting next to him had stretched out a hand covered with blood. Had he perhaps suddenly divined the truth? Did it occur to him just then that these had effected an entrance into the house where his beloved was staying?

Gandolfo told how the officers, who were to be the judges, had entered, silently and solemnly, and had sat down in their places. But, he said, when he saw these grand gentlemen, his anxiety had decreased. He had said to himself, that they knew that Don Gaetano was a noble gentleman, and that

they would not convict him. They would not confound him with the bandits. How could any one believe that he had wished to plunder two women.

And behold, when the judge summoned Gaetano Alagona, his voice was without harshness. He spoke to him as to an equal.

"But," said Gandolfo, "now when Gaetano rose his position was such that he could look out over the market-place. And here in this very place, where now so many people are sitting in joy and delight, a funeral procession was then marching along.

"It was the white brotherhood, who carried the body of the murdered Giannita to her mother's house. They carried torches, and one could plainly see the litter which rested on the shoulders of the bearers. While the procession moved slowly across the square it was possible to recognize the pall spread over the corpse. It was the pall of the Alagonas adorned with their showy arms and rich silver fringe. But when Gaetano saw this he knew that the murdered was from the house of the Alagonas. His face became ashy, and he staggered as though he were about to fall.

"At that moment the judge asked him: 'Do you know the murdered?' And he answered: 'Yes.' Then the judge, who was a compassionate man, continued: 'Was she near to you?' And Don Gaetano answered: 'I love her.'"

When Gandolfo had proceeded so far in his narration, Donna Micaela was seen to rise impetuously, as though she had wished to gainsay him, but Cavaliere Palmeri drew her down quickly beside him.

"Be still, be still," he said to her.

And she sat quietly with her face bowed in her hands. Now and then she rocked her body to and fro, and moaned softly.

But Gandolfo told how the judge, when Gaetano had confessed this, had pointed to his fellow-prisoners and asked him: "If you loved this woman, how then can you have anything in common with these, who have murdered her?"

Then Don Gaetano had turned to the brigands. He had lifted his clenched hand towards them and shaken it. And he had looked as if he wished he had a dagger to thrust them down one by one.

"With these!" he had cried: "Should I have anything in common with these?"

And in all probability he had intended to say that he had nothing to do with robbers and murderers. The judge had smiled kindly upon him and looked as though he were only waiting for this answer in order to acquit him.

But a miracle of God had then taken place.

And Gandolfo told how, among all the stolen articles lying on the court-table, there was also a little Christ image. It was about two feet high, and richly beset with jewelry, and arrayed in a gold crown and gold shoes. Just at that moment one of the officers bent forward to take the little image, and in doing so, the crown fell to the floor and rolled to Don Gaetano's feet.

Don Gaetano took up the crown, held it for a moment in his hands, and examined it carefully. It seemed as if he had read something on it.

He held it only for a moment. In the next the guard took it away from him.

Donna Micaela looked up, almost terrified. The image of Christ! There he was already. Would her prayer be answered immediately?

Gandolfo continued: "But when Gaetano now looked up, every one trembled as though they beheld a miracle, for the man was transfigured.

"O, signori, he was so white that his face appeared luminous, and his eyes were calm and beamed softly.

"And in him was no longer any anger.

"And he began to pray for his fellow-prisoners, he began to pray for their lives.

"He prayed, that they should not kill these wretched fellow-creatures. He prayed that the august judges should instead do something for them, so that they might live as others. We have only this life to live, he said. 'Our kingdom is only of this world.'

"He began to tell how these men had lived. He spoke as though he were able to read their souls. He told the story of their dismal and wretched lives. His speech was such that a few of the august gentlemen wept.

"The words came strong and forcibly, so that it seemed as if Don Gaetano had been judge and the judges the offenders. 'Behold!' he said to them, 'whose fault is it, that these poor human beings have been lost? Ought not you, who possess the power, to have taken care of them?'

"And one saw how filled with consternation they were at the responsibility he threw upon them.

"But the judge had suddenly interrupted him.

"'Speak in your own defense, Gaetano Alagona,' he said, 'and not in behalf of others!'

"Then had Don Gaetano smiled. 'Signor,' he said,

'I have not much more than you to defend myself with. But I have nevertheless something. I have given up my pursuit in England for the sake of aiding the rebellion in Sicily. I have brought home weapons. I have made revolutionary speeches. 'I have something though not much.'

"The judge had almost begged him. 'Do not speak so, Don Gaetano,' he had said. 'Think of what you are saying!'

"His confessions, however, were such, that they were compelled to sentence him.

"When they had told him that he should be put in prison for twenty-nine years he had cried: 'Now her will is done, whom they just carried past. May it be as she wished!'

"And I saw no more of him," said the little Gandolfo, for the guardsmen took him between them and led him away.

"But I who heard him pray for them, who had murdered his beloved, promised myself that I would do something for him.

"I promised to recite a beautiful improvisation to San Sebastiano in order that he might help him. But I have not succeeded. I am no improvisatore, I could not do it."

Here he ceased and threw himself down before the image and sobbed aloud. "Forgive me that I was not able," he cried, "and help him notwithstanding. Thou knowest that when they sentenced him I promised to do this for his sake, so that thou might save him, but now I have not been able to speak of thee and thou wilt not help him."

Donna Micaela hardly knew how it happened that

she and little Rosalia, who loved Gandolfo, were at his side almost simultaneously. They embraced and kissed him and told him that no one had spoken like him, no one, no one. Didn't he see how they wept? San Sebastiano was satisfied with him. Donna Micaela put a ring on the boy's finger and round about him was waving of many-colored silk handkerchiefs, which glittered like waves in the intense light from the cathedral wall. "Viva Gaetano, viva Gandolfo!" cried the people.

And flowers and fruit and silk handkerchiefs and trinkets rained down upon little Gandolfo. Donna Micaela was pushed away from him almost by force. But it did not occur to her to feel frightened. She stood right in the midst of the surging throng weeping. The tears streamed down her face, and she wept for joy. That was the greatest blessing of all.

She wanted to push forward to Gandolfo, she could not thank him enough. Had he not told her that Gaetano loved her. When he had quoted these words: "Now is her will done, whom they just now carried by, she had understood at once, that Gaetano had believed it was she lying there under the Alagona pall.

And of the dead one he had said: "I love her."

The blood flowed anew in her veins, her heart beat again, the tears fell. "It is life, life,' she said to herself, while she passively was carried back and forth by the crowd. "Life has returned to me. I shall not die."

All pressed forward to little Gandolfo to thank him because he gave them something to love, to hope for, to long for, during these days of gloom, when all seemed lost.

BOOK II

"Antichrist shall go from land to land and give bread to the poor."

I

A GREAT MAN'S WIFE

It was in February and the almond-trees commenced to blossom on the black lava fields round about Diamante.

Cavaliere Palmeri had taken a walk up Etna and brought home a large almond branch, full of buds and flowers, and placed it in a vase in the music-room.

Donna Micaela started when she saw it. They had come, then, the almond flowers. And for a whole month, for six whole weeks, they would be found everywhere.

They would stand on the altar in church, they would lie on the graves, and they would be worn in the buttonhole, in the hat, in the hair. They would bloom along the roads, among the ruins, on the black lava. And every flower would remind her of the day that the bells rang, when Gaetano was free and happy, and she dreamed of a whole long life with him.

It seemed to her as though she had never before

fully understood what it meant, that he was gone, imprisoned, that she never more should see him.

She was obliged to sit down to keep from falling, it seemed as if her heart would cease beating, and she closed her eyes.

While she sat thus she had a vision.

She seemed to find herself all at once at home in the palace in Catania. She sits in the lofty vestibule, reading, and she is a gay young lady, Signorina Palmeri. A footman then enters, ushering in a pedler. It is a young, handsome fellow, with a sprig of almond blossoms in his buttonhole, on his head he carries a board full of small images of saints, carved in wood.

She buys a few of the images, and in the meantime the young man's eyes devour all the works of art in the vestibule. She asks him if he would like to see their collections. Of course he would. And she herself accompanies him and shows him.

What he sees affords him such great pleasure that she thinks he ought to become a real artist, and she promises herself not to forget him. She asks him where he lives.—He replies : "In Diamante"—"Is that far away?"—"Four miles by the mail coach."—"And by railroad?"—"There is no railroad to Diamante, signorina."—"You must build one."—"We are too poor. Ask the rich people of Catania to build us a railroad!"

When he has said this he goes to the door, but turns, and comes and gives her his almond blossoms. It was an acknowledgment for all the lovely things he had been permitted to see.

When Donna Micaela opened her eyes, she did

not know whether she had dreamed or whether something similar had happened in reality. Gaetano might very well have been in Palazzo Palmeri to sell his images, although it had escaped her memory, but now the almond blossoms had recalled it.

But what did that matter? The main thing was that the young carver was Gaetano. It seemed as though she had been speaking with him. She thought she heard the door close behind him.

And it was after this that the idea occurred to her of building a railroad between Catania and Diamante.

Surely Gaetano had come to beg her to do this. It was a command from him, and she felt that she must obey.

She made no attempt whatever to struggle against it. She was certain that Diamante needed a railroad more than anything else. She had once heard Gaetano say that if Diamante only had a railroad, so that they easily could send away their oranges and wine and their honey and their almonds, and so that the tourists could conveniently get there, then it would soon be a rich city.

She also felt quite certain that a railroad could be brought about. At all events she must try. It did not at all occur to her to refrain from doing so. Since Gaetano wished it, she must obey.

She began immediately to consider how much money she herself could contribute. But that would not go far. She must procure money. That was the first thing to be done.

That same hour, she was over to Donna Elisa and asking her for help to arrange a bazar. Donna Elisa

lifted her eyes from her embroidery. "Why do you wish to arrange a bazar?"—"I intend to collect money for a railroad."—"That's like you, Donna Micaela, no one else would have thought of such a thing."—"What, Donna Elisa? What do you mean?"—"Oh, nothing." And Donna Elisa kept on embroidering.

"You won't have anything to do with the bazar then?"—"No."—"And would you not make a small contribution towards it?"—"One who so recently has lost her husband," answered Donna Elisa, "should not begin with nonsense."

Donna Micaela perceived that Donna Elisa was vexed with her for one reason or another, and therefore would not help her. But surely there were others who would see that this was a glorious idea, which would rescue Diamante.

But Donna Micaela had to wander in vain from door to door. No matter how much she talked and begged, she gained no adherents.

She tried to explain. She used all her eloquence in persuading, but no one would acquiesce in her scheme.

Wherever she went she received the same answer: "We are too poor."

The syndic's wife answered no. Her daughters should not be allowed to take part in the bazar. Don Antonio Greco, who owned the marionette theater, would not come with his dolls. The city musicians would not play. No merchant would provide goods. When she had gone, all only laughed at her.

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pany formed, shares, by-laws, concessions. How should a woman be able to manage such things?

Some, however, were not satisfied with laughing at Donna Micaela, some became angry with her.

She went to the cellar-like shop near the old Benedictine monastery, where Master Pamphilio related stories of chivalry. She came to ask him if he would come to her bazar and entertain the audience with Charles the Great and his knight-errants, but as he was just in the middle of a discourse, she had to sit down on a bench and wait.

She then observed Donna Concetta, Master Pamphilio's wife, who sat on the platform at his feet with her knitting. As long as Master Pamphilio spoke Donna Concetta's lips moved. She had heard his stories so many times that she knew them by heart, and pronounced the words before they had passed Master Pamphilio's lips. Nevertheless she always felt the same pleasure in listening to him, and she wept and laughed as she had done when she heard him for the first time.

Master Pamphilio was an old man, who had talked a great deal in his day, so that his voice failed him when he came to the great battle scenes, and it was necessary to speak vehemently and fast. But Donna Concetta, who knew every point by heart, never took the word away from Master Pamphilio. She only made a sign to the audience that they should wait till the voice came. But if memory failed him, Donna Concetta feigned that she had dropped a stitch, put her knitting up to her eye and whispered the word to him from behind it, so that no one noticed it. And all knew that although Donna

Concetta might perhaps have been able to relate the stories better than Master Pamphilio, she would never have wished to do so, not only because such a thing would have been unseemly in a woman, but also because it could not have been such a pleasure to her as to hear the dear Master Pamphilio.

When Donna Micaela saw Donna Concetta, she fell to dreaming. O, to sit thus, below the platform where the beloved one was speaking, to sit thus day after day and adore.

But when Master Pamphilio had finished speaking, Donna Micaela went up to him and begged him to help her. And it was difficult for him to say no, on account of the thousand prayers written in her eyes. But Donna Concetta came to his aid. "Master Pamphilio," she said, "relate about Guglielmo the Wicked, for Donna Micaela." And Master Pamphilio related.

"Donna Micaela," he said, "do you know that in Sicily there was once a king named Guglielmo the Wicked? He was so stingy that he took away from his subjects all their money. He commanded that all who owned gold coins should give them to him. And he was so harsh and cruel that all were compelled to obey him.

"Well, Donna Micaela, now Guglielmo the Wicked wished to know if any of his subjects had gold coins concealed in their houses. And therefore he sent out one of his servants along the Corso in Palermo with a beautiful horse. And the man offered the horse for sale and cried loudly: 'Will be sold for a gold coin, will be sold for a gold coin!' But there was no one who could buy the horse.

"However it was a very beautiful horse, and a young gentleman in Palermo, Prince Montefiascone, became very much charmed with it. 'There is no more joy for me, if I cannot buy that horse,' he said to his steward. 'Signor Duca,' answe.ed his steward, 'I can tell you where you can find a gold coin. When your father died and was taken away to the Capuchins, I placed, according to ancient custom, a gold coin in his mouth. Why not take that, signor?'

"For know, Donna Micaela, that in Palermo they do not bury their dead in the ground. They convey them to the monastery of the Capuchins, and hang them up in their sepulchers. Ah, how many there are hanging in those chambers! So many ladies dressed in silk and silver-gauze, so many grand gentlemen with orders on their dress-coats, and so many priests in gown and calotte, over the skeleton and death-skull.

"The young prince followed the advice. He proceeded to the Capuchin's monastery, took the gold coin out of his father's mouth, and bought the horse with it.

"But mark that the king had sent out his servant with the horse only to find out if any one still possessed money. And now the prince was brought before the king. 'How happens it that you still have gold coins?' said Guglielmo the Wicked. 'Sire, it was not mine, it was my father's. And he related how he had got the coin. 'You speak truly,' said the king. 'I had forgotten that the dead still own money.' And he sent his servants to the Capuchins and had all the coins removed from the mouths of the dead."

Here old Master Pamphilio ended his narrative. And now Donna Concetta turned in anger to Donna Micaela. "It is you who are out leading the horse," she said.

"Am I? am I?"

"You, you, Donna Micaela. The government will now say: 'They are building a railroad in Diamante. They are rich then.' And it will increase our taxes. And God knows that we are not able to pay the tax we already are burdened with, even if we took and plundered our forefathers."

Donna Micaela tried to calm her.

"They have sent you to find out if we still have any money. You are a spy for the rich, you are in league with the government. Those bloodsuckers in Rome have paid you."

Donna Micaela turned away from her.

"I came to speak with you, Master Pamphilio," she said, turning to the old man.

"But I am the one to answer you," remarked Donna Concetta," because this is an unpleasant affair, and such I must manage. I know what is incumbent on the wife of a great man, Donna Micaela."

Donna Concetta ceased, for the fine lady looked at her with eyes so full of envious pining, that it filled her with pity. But then there had also been a difference in the men, Don Ferrante and Master Pamphilio!

II

PANEM ET CIRCENSIS

In Diamante travelers are shown two palaces, crumbling to ruins without ever having been completed. They have immense window embrasures without frames, high walls without roof and great portals closed up by boards and straw. The two palaces lie opposite each other on both sides of the streets, both equally incomplete and equally ruinous. There is no scaffolding around them, and no one can get inside them. They seem to be built only for the doves.

And this is what is told of them.

" What is a woman, O signore? Her foot is so small, that she passes through the world and leaves no trace behind her. To the man she is as his shadow. She has followed him through his whole life without his noticing her.

" One cannot expect much of a woman. Is she not shut up all day in the house like a prisoner? She cannot even learn to spell a love-letter correctly. She can do nothing that has consistency. When she is dead, there is nothing to write on her gravestone. All women are of about the same height.

" But one time there came to Diamante a woman who was so much above all others as the century-old palm is above the grass. She had lires

by the ten thousand and could give them away or keep them, as she pleased. She went out of the way for nobody. She feared not to become hated. She was the greatest wonder eyes had ever beheld.

"Of course she was no Sicilian. She was English. And the first thing she did on her arrival, was to take the first floor of the hotel for herself alone. But what was that for her? All Diamante had not been sufficient for her.

"No, all Diamante was certainly not enough for her. However, as soon as she came she began to reign over the city as a queen. The syndic had to obey her. Was it not she who compelled him to place stone benches on the market-place! Was it not at her command that the streets were swept every day!

"In the morning when she woke, all the young men of Diamante stood waiting outside her door to be her escort on some excursion. They had left the shoemakers' bench and the stone-pick to serve her as guides. They had sold their mother's silk dresses to buy lady's saddles for their donkeys, so that *she* might ride to the citadel or Tre Castagni. They had deprived themselves of house and home to purchase a horse, so that they might drive her to Randazzo and Nicolosi.

"We were all her slaves. The children began to beg in English, and the blind women at the hotel gate, Donna Pepa and Donna Tura, draped themselves in dazzling white veils to please her.

"Everything moved round her, trade and professions grew up around her. They who could do nothing else dug in the earth after coins and earthen-

ware to offer her. Photographers took up their abode in the city and commenced to work for her. Coral-traders and tortoise mongers grew up from the earth about her. The priests in Santa Agnese dug up the old Dionysius theater, which lay hidden behind their church, for her sake, and everyone who owned a tumbling down villa, dug out, in the darkness of the cellars, fragments of mosaic floors, and by great placards invited her to come and see.

"There had, to be sure, been strangers ere now in Diamante, but they had come and gone and no one had possessed such power. Soon there was not a man in the city who did not put all his trust in the English signorina. She even succeeded in putting a little life in Ugo Favara. You recollect Ugo Favara, the advocate, who was to become a great man, but who met with adversity and came home quite broken down. She employed him to look after her affairs. She needed him, and she took him.

"There had never been a woman in Diamante who had done such business as she. She spread like green-weed in spring. One day no one yet knows that it is there, the next it is a large knoll. Soon one could hardly go anywhere in Diamante without lighting on her ground. She bought a country-seat and city-residence, she bought almond groves and lava streams. All the beautiful places on Etna, from which one had a fine view were hers, and likewise the soggy land on the plain. And in the city she commenced to build two large palaces. In them she would live and rule her kingdom.

"Never again shall one behold a woman like her. It was not enough with all that. She also wished

to struggle with poverty, O, Signore, with Sicilian poverty! What did she not distribute daily, and what did she not give away during the festivals! Carts drawn by two pairs of oxen, drove down to Catania and came back laden with all sorts of clothing. She was determined that all should have whole clothes in the city where she reigned.

"But now, listen what happened to her, what came of her struggle against poverty and of her sovereign power and her palaces.

"She gave a banquet for the poor of Diamante, and after the banquet a play at the Grecian theater. It was what an emperor might have done. But who had ever before heard of a woman doing such a thing?

"She invited all the poor. There were the two blind women from the hotel gate and old Assunta from the cathedral steps. There was the man from the post-office, who had his chin done up in a red handkerchief on account of cancer of the face; and the idiot, who opens the iron portals of the Grecian theater, was there. All the donkey-boys were there, and the brothers without hands, who blew up a bomb in their childhood and lost their fingers; and there were the invalid with the wooden leg and the old chairmaker, who had become too old to work.

"It was wonderful to see them crawl out of their holes, all the poor of Diamante. The old women who sit at their distaffs in the dark lanes were there, and the organ grinder who has an instrument as large as a church organ and a wandering young mandolin player from Naples filled with all sorts of deviltry. All those who had eye diseases and the

decrepit, they who were without roofs over their heads, they who were wont to gather sorrel at the roadside for dinner, the stone cutter who earned a lire a day and had six children to care for, all had been invited and were present at the feast.

"It was poverty, advancing its troops against the English signorina. Who indeed has such an army as poverty? But for once the English signorina could conquer him.

"She had also something to fight with and to conquer with. She had the whole market-place full of tables amply provided with all sorts of good things. She had barrels of wine laid up the whole length of the stone-bench which ran along the cathedral wall. She had transformed the whole extinct convent into a dining-table and kitchen. She had the whole colony of strangers in Diamante, dressed in white aprons, distributing the courses. She had the Diamante who were wont to eat their fill, sauntering back and forth as spectators.

"Ah, spectators, who indeed were not her spectators! She had the mighty Etna, and the glittering sun. She had the rosy inland mountains and the ancient temple of Vulcan now consecrated to San Pasquale. And none of these had ever beheld Diamante satiated. It had never occurred to them until now how much would be added to their own beauty if, in beholding them, hunger did not hiss in one's ears and tread on one's heels.

"Remarkable and great as this signorina was, beauty she did not possess. And, in spite of all her power, she was not pleasing or charming. She governed not with jest nor did she reward with smiles.

She had a heavy, inactive body, and she had a heavy and inactive temperament.

"This day when she gave food to the poor, she seemed quite like a different being. A chivalrous people inhabit our noble isle. Among all these poor there was no one who made her feel that she practised charity. They worshiped her, but it was as woman they worshiped her. They sat down to dine as though it were with an equal. They treated her as a hostess is treated by her guests. To-day I do you the honor of coming to you, to-morrow you do me the honor of coming to me.

" She stood on the high steps of the court-house and looked down over the tables. And when the old chair-maker, who sat at the head of the table, had had his glass filled, he rose, bowed to her and said: 'I drink to your welfare, signorina.'

" And thus they all did. They laid the hand on the heart, and bowed to her. It had perhaps been well for her if she had met with so much chivalry earlier in life. Why had the men in her native land suffered her to forget that women are made to adore?

"Here all looked as though they burned with gentle adoration. Thus the women on our noble isle are treated. What did they not give in return for the food and wine she bestowed. They gave youth and a light heart, and all the honor of being enviable. They made speeches to her. 'Magnanimous signorina, you who have come to us from over the sea, you who love Sicily,' and so forth and so forth. She showed that she could blush. She no longer concealed that she had a smile. When they had finished speaking, the lips of the

English signorina commenced to quiver. She became twenty years younger. It was what she needed.

"There was the donkey-boy, who was wont to conduct the English ladies up to Tre Castagni, and who always fell in love with them,before parting with them. His eyes were now suddenly opened for the great benefactress. It is not a slender, delicate body and a soft complexion only that are worthy of adoration, but also power and energy. The donkey-boy suddenly dropped knife and fork, rested his elbows on the table and remained in that posture looking at her. And all the other donkey-boys did likewise. It spread like a disease. It became hot round the English signorina from burning glances.

"It was not the poor alone that worshiped her. The advocate, Ugo Favara, came and whispered to her that she was come as a providence to his impoverished country and to him. 'If I only had met such a woman as you before,' he said.

"Just fancy an old bird that has sat in his cage for many years and become seedy, and has lost all luster. And then someone comes and puts everything to rights and restores the luster. Just fancy that, signore!

"There was that boy from Naples. He took out his mandolin all of a sudden and began to sing. You know how he sings, and how he whimpers with his enormous mouth, and repeats bad words. Oftenest he is like a grinning mask. But have you seen that he has an angel in his eyes? An angel that seems to weep over his fall and is full of all sorts of mischief. And to-night he was only angel.

He lifted his head as if he had been inspired by God, and the limp body became buoyant and straightened itself up, fired with fresh courage. The deathly pale cheeks received color, and he sang so that one saw the tones rushing from his lips like fireflies filling the air with gladness.

"As night drew near, all marched to the Grecian Theater. That was the conclusion of the feast. What had she not to offer there!

"She had the Russian singer and the German variety-artist. She had the English wrestlers and the American jugglers. But was that compared to everything else, to the silvery moonlight, and to the place and to the memories! It was as though the poor had felt themselves as Greeks and propagators of culture, as they once more were permitted to stretch themselves on the stone benches of their own dear theater, and, between the crumbling pillars of the scene to gaze out upon the grandest of panoramas. The poor were not parsimonious, they shared all the happiness bestowed upon them. They were not sparing of exultation, their applause was without limit. They who appeared on the platform descended from it with a wealth of praise.

"Someone exhorted the English signorina to appear on the scene. Was not all this homage intended for her? She ought to stand face to face with it and feel it. And they told her how it intoxicated, how it lifted, how it animated.

"The proposal pleased her. She agreed to it immediately. She had sung in her youth, and the English are such that they never fear to sing. She would not have done it otherwise, but now she was

BOOK II

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pany formed, shares, by-laws, concessions. How should a woman be able to manage such things?

Some, however, were not satisfied with laughing at Donna Micaela, some became angry with her.

She went to the cellar-like shop near the old Benedictine monastery, where Master Pamphilio related stories of chivalry. She came to ask him if he would come to her bazar and entertain the audience with Charles the Great and his knight-errants, but as he was just in the middle of a discourse, she had to sit down on a bench and wait.

She then observed Donna Concetta, Master Pamphilio's wife, who sat on the platform at his feet with her knitting. As long as Master Pamphilio spoke Donna Concetta's lips moved. She had heard his stories so many times that she knew them by heart, and pronounced the words before they had passed Master Pamphilio's lips. Nevertheless she always felt the same pleasure in listening to him, and she wept and laughed as she had done when she heard him for the first time.

Master Pamphilio was an old man, who had talked a great deal in his day, so that his voice failed him when he came to the great battle scenes, and it was necessary to speak vehemently and fast. But Donna Concetta, who knew every point by heart, never took the word away from Master Pamphilio. She only made a sign to the audience that they should wait till the voice came. But if memory failed him, Donna Concetta feigned that she had dropped a stitch, put her knitting up to her eye and whispered the word to him from behind it, so that no one noticed it. And all knew that although Donna

Concetta might perhaps have been able to relate the stories better than Master Pamphilio, she would never have wished to do so, not only because such a thing would have been unseemly in a woman, but also because it could not have been such a pleasure to her as to hear the dear Master Pamphilio.

When Donna Micaela saw Donna Concetta, she fell to dreaming. O, to sit thus, below the platform where the beloved one was speaking, to sit thus day after day and adore.

But when Master Pamphilio had finished speaking, Donna Micaela went up to him and begged him to help her. And it was difficult for him to say no, on account of the thousand prayers written in her eyes. But Donna Concetta came to his aid. "Master Pamphilio," she said, "relate about Guglielmo the Wicked, for Donna Micaela." And Master Pamphilio related.

"Donna Micaela," he said, "do you know that in Sicily there was once a king named Guglielmo the Wicked? He was so stingy that he took away from his subjects all their money. He commanded that all who owned gold coins should give them to him. And he was so harsh and cruel that all were compelled to obey him.

"Well, Donna Micaela, now Guglielmo the Wicked wished to know if any of his subjects had gold coins concealed in their houses. And therefore he sent out one of his servants along the Corso in Palermo with a beautiful horse. And the man offered the horse for sale and cried loudly: 'Will be sold for a gold coin, will be sold for a gold coin!' But there was no one who could buy the horse.

"However it was a very beautiful horse, and a young gentleman in Palermo, Prince Montefiascone, became very much charmed with it. 'There is no more joy for me, if I cannot buy that horse,' he said to his steward. 'Signor Duca,' answe.ed his steward, 'I can tell you where you can find a gold coin. When your father died and was taken away to the Capuchins, I placed, according to ancient custom, a gold coin in his mouth. Why not take that, signor?'

"For know, Donna Micaela, that in Palermo they do not bury their dead in the ground. They convey them to the monastery of the Capuchins, and hang them up in their sepulchers. Ah, how many there are hanging in those chambers! So many ladies dressed in silk and silver-gauze, so many grand gentlemen with orders on their dress-coats, and so many priests in gown and calotte, over the skeleton and death-skull.

"The young prince followed the advice. He proceeded to the Capuchin's monastery, took the gold coin out of his father's mouth, and bought the horse with it.

"But mark that the king had sent out his servant with the horse only to find out if any one still possessed money. And now the prince was brought before the king. 'How happens it that you still have gold coins?' said Guglielmo the Wicked. 'Sire, it was not mine, it was my father's. And he related how he had got the coin. 'You speak truly,' said the king. 'I had forgotten that the dead still own money.' And he sent his servants to the Capuchins and had all the coins removed from the mouths of the dead."

Here old Master Pamphilio ended his narrative. And now Donna Concetta turned in anger to Donna Micaela. "It is you who are out leading the horse," she said.

"Am I? am I?"

"You, you, Donna Micaela. The government will now say: 'They are building a railroad in Diamante. They are rich then.' And it will increase our taxes. And God knows that we are not able to pay the tax we already are burdened with, even if we took and plundered our forefathers."

Donna Micaela tried to calm her.

"They have sent you to find out if we still have any money. You are a spy for the rich, you are in league with the government. Those bloodsuckers in Rome have paid you."

Donna Micaela turned away from her.

"I came to speak with you, Master Pamphilio," she said, turning to the old man.

"But I am the one to answer you," remarked Donna Concetta," because this is an unpleasant affair, and such I must manage. I know what is incumbent on the wife of a great man, Donna Micaela."

Donna Concetta ceased, for the fine lady looked at her with eyes so full of envious pining, that it filled her with pity. But then there had also been a difference in the men, Don Ferrante and Master Pamphilio!

II

PANEM ET CIRCENSIS

In Diamante travelers are shown two palaces, crumbling to ruins without ever having been completed. They have immense window embrasures without frames, high walls without roof and great portals closed up by boards and straw. The two palaces lie opposite each other on both sides of the streets, both equally incomplete and equally ruinous. There is no scaffolding around them, and no one can get inside them. They seem to be built only for the doves.

And this is what is told of them.

"What is a woman, O signore? Her foot is so small, that she passes through the world and leaves no trace behind her. To the man she is as his shadow. She has followed him through his whole life without his noticing her.

"One cannot expect much of a woman. Is she not shut up all day in the house like a prisoner? She cannot even learn to spell a love-letter correctly. She can do nothing that has consistency. When she is dead, there is nothing to write on her gravestone. All women are of about the same height.

"But one time there came to Diamante a woman who was so much above all others as the century-old palm is above the grass. She had lires

by the ten thousand and could give them away or keep them, as she pleased. She went out of the way for nobody. She feared not to become hated. She was the greatest wonder eyes had ever beheld.

"Of course she was no Sicilian. She was English. And the first thing she did on her arrival, was to take the first floor of the hotel for herself alone. But what was that for her? All Diamante had not been sufficient for her.

"No, all Diamante was certainly not enough for her. However, as soon as she came she began to reign over the city as a queen. The syndic had to obey her. Was it not she who compelled him to place stone benches on the market-place! Was it not at her command that the streets were swept every day!

"In the morning when she woke, all the young men of Diamante stood waiting outside her door to be her escort on some excursion. They had left the shoemakers' bench and the stone-pick to serve her as guides. They had sold their mother's silk dresses to buy lady's saddles for their donkeys, so that *she* might ride to the citadel or Tre Castagni. They had deprived themselves of house and home to purchase a horse, so that they might drive her to Randazzo and Nicolosi.

"We were all her slaves. The children began to beg in English, and the blind women at the hotel gate, Donna Pepa and Donna Tura, draped themselves in dazzling white veils to please her.

"Everything moved round her, trade and professions grew up around her. They who could do nothing else dug in the earth after coins and earthen-

ware to offer her. Photographers took up their abode in the city and commenced to work for her. Coral-traders and tortoise mongers grew up from the earth about her. The priests in Santa Agnese dug up the old Dionysius theater, which lay hidden behind their church, for her sake, and everyone who owned a tumbling down villa, dug out, in the darkness of the cellars, fragments of mosaic floors, and by great placards invited her to come and see.

" There had, to be sure, been strangers ere now in Diamante, but they had come and gone and no one had possessed such power. Soon there was not a man in the city who did not put all his trust in the English signorina. She even succeeded in putting a little life in Ugo Favara. You recollect Ugo Favara, the advocate, who was to become a great man, but who met with adversity and came home quite broken down. She employed him to look after her affairs. She needed him, and she took him.

"There had never been a woman in Diamante who had done such business as she. She spread like green-weed in spring. One day no one yet knows that it is there, the next it is a large knoll. Soon one could hardly go anywhere in Diamante without lighting on her ground. She bought a country-seat and city-residence, she bought almond groves and lava streams. All the beautiful places on Etna, from which one had a fine view were hers, and likewise the soggy land on the plain. And in the city she commenced to build two large palaces. In them she would live and rule her kingdom.

" Never again shall one behold a woman like her. It was not enough with all that. She also wished

to struggle with poverty, O, Signore, with Sicilian poverty! What did she not distribute daily, and what did she not give away during the festivals! Carts drawn by two pairs of oxen, drove down to Catania and came back laden with all sorts of clothing. She was determined that all should have whole clothes in the city where she reigned.

"But now, listen what happened to her, what came of her struggle against poverty and of her sovereign power and her palaces.

"She gave a banquet for the poor of Diamante, and after the banquet a play at the Grecian theater. It was what an emperor might have done. But who had ever before heard of a woman doing such a thing?

"She invited all the poor. There were the two blind women from the hotel gate and old Assunta from the cathedral steps. There was the man from the post-office, who had his chin done up in a red handkerchief on account of cancer of the face; and the idiot, who opens the iron portals of the Grecian theater, was there. All the donkey-boys were there, and the brothers without hands, who blew up a bomb in their childhood and lost their fingers; and there were the invalid with the wooden leg and the old chairmaker, who had become too old to work.

"It was wonderful to see them crawl out of their holes, all the poor of Diamante. The old women who sit at their distaffs in the dark lanes were there, and the organ grinder who has an instrument as large as a church organ and a wandering young mandolin player from Naples filled with all sorts of deviltry. All those who had eye diseases and the

decrepit, they who were without roofs over their heads, they who were wont to gather sorrel at the roadside for dinner, the stone cutter who earned a lire a day and had six children to care for, all had been invited and were present at the feast.

"It was poverty, advancing its troops against the English signorina. Who indeed has such an army as poverty? But for once the English signorina could conquer him.

"She had also something to fight with and to conquer with. She had the whole market-place full of tables amply provided with all sorts of good things. She had barrels of wine laid up the whole length of the stone-bench which ran along the cathedral wall. She had transformed the whole extinct convent into a dining-table and kitchen. She had the whole colony of strangers in Diamante, dressed in white aprons, distributing the courses. She had the Diamante who were wont to eat their fill, sauntering back and forth as spectators.

"Ah, spectators, who indeed were not her spectators! She had the mighty Etna, and the glittering sun. She had the rosy inland mountains and the ancient temple of Vulcan now consecrated to San Pasquale. And none of these had ever beheld Diamante satiated. It had never occurred to them until now how much would be added to their own beauty if, in beholding them, hunger did not hiss in one's ears and tread on one's heels.

"Remarkable and great as this signorina was, beauty she did not possess. And, in spite of all her power, she was not pleasing or charming. She governed not with jest nor did she reward with smiles.

She had a heavy, inactive body, and she had a heavy and inactive temperament.

"This day when she gave food to the poor, she seemed quite like a different being. A chivalrous people inhabit our noble isle. Among all these poor there was no one who made her feel that she practised charity. They worshiped her, but it was as woman they worshiped her. They sat down to dine as though it were with an equal. They treated her as a hostess is treated by her guests. To-day I do you the honor of coming to you, to-morrow you do me the honor of coming to me.

"She stood on the high steps of the court-house and looked down over the tables. And when the old chair-maker, who sat at the head of the table, had had his glass filled, he rose, bowed to her and said: 'I drink to your welfare, signorina.'

"And thus they all did. They laid the hand on the heart, and bowed to her. It had perhaps been well for her if she had met with so much chivalry earlier in life. Why had the men in her native land suffered her to forget that women are made to adore?

"Here all looked as though they burned with gentle adoration. Thus the women on our noble isle are treated. What did they not give in return for the food and wine she bestowed. They gave youth and a light heart, and all the honor of being enviable. They made speeches to her. 'Magnanimous signorina, you who have come to us from over the sea, you who love Sicily,' and so forth and so forth. She showed that she could blush. She no longer concealed that she had a smile. When they had finished speaking, the lips of the

English signorina commenced to quiver. She became twenty years younger. It was what she needed.

"There was the donkey-boy, who was wont to conduct the English ladies up to Tre Castagni, and who always fell in love with them, before parting with them. His eyes were now suddenly opened for the great benefactress. It is not a slender, delicate body and a soft complexion only that are worthy of adoration, but also power and energy. The donkey-boy suddenly dropped knife and fork, rested his elbows on the table and remained in that posture looking at her. And all the other donkey-boys did likewise. It spread like a disease. It became hot round the English signorina from burning glances.

"It was not the poor alone that worshiped her. The advocate, Ugo Favara, came and whispered to her that she was come as a providence to his impoverished country and to him. 'If I only had met such a woman as you before,' he said.

"Just fancy an old bird that has sat in his cage for many years and become seedy, and has lost all luster. And then someone comes and puts everything to rights and restores the luster. Just fancy that, signore!

"There was that boy from Naples. He took out his mandolin all of a sudden and began to sing. You know how he sings, and how he whimpers with his enormous mouth, and repeats bad words. Oftenest he is like a grinning mask. But have you seen that he has an angel in his eyes? An angel that seems to weep over his fall and is full of all sorts of mischief. And to-night he was only angel.

He lifted his head as if he had been inspired by God, and the limp body became buoyant and straightened itself up, fired with fresh courage. The deathly pale cheeks received color, and he sang so that one saw the tones rushing from his lips like fireflies filling the air with gladness.

"As night drew near, all marched to the Grecian Theater. That was the conclusion of the feast. What had she not to offer there!

"She had the Russian singer and the German variety-artist. She had the English wrestlers and the American jugglers. But was that compared to everything else, to the silvery moonlight, and to the place and to the memories! It was as though the poor had felt themselves as Greeks and propagators of culture, as they once more were permitted to stretch themselves on the stone benches of their own dear theater, and, between the crumbling pillars of the scene to gaze out upon the grandest of panoramas. The poor were not parsimonious, they shared all the happiness bestowed upon them. They were not sparing of exultation, their applause was without limit. They who appeared on the platform descended from it with a wealth of praise.

"Someone exhorted the English signorina to appear on the scene. Was not all this homage intended for her? She ought to stand face to face with it and feel it. And they told her how it intoxicated, how it lifted, how it animated.

"The proposal pleased her. She agreed to it immediately. She had sung in her youth, and the English are such that they never fear to sing. She would not have done it otherwise, but now she was

never do to shorten the princess's silk trains and be sparing of the gilt on the kingly crowns, at the moment when people are losing interest in going to the theater.

Perhaps it is not so hazardous at another theater, but at a marionette-theater it is more than precarious to make changes. And the reason for this is, that for the most part it is half-grown boys that patronize the marionette theater. Grown-up people can understand that at times it is necessary to be saving; children, however, always want to have things the same way.

Don Antonio's spectators grew less and less in number, and he continued to be more and more saving. So it occurred to him that he could dispense with the two blind violinists, Father Elia and Brother Tommaso, who always used to play during the entre-acts and during battle-scenes.

These blind men, whose profits from singing in houses of mourning were considerable, and who took in large sums during feast-days, were too expensive to keep. Don Antonio dismissed them and procured a hand-organ.

But that became his ruin. All apprentices and shop-boys in Diamante ceased going to the theater. They were not going to sit and listen to a hand-organ. They promised each other not to go to the theater again until Don Antonio had taken back the violinists. And they kept their promise. Don Antonio's puppets played before empty walls.

These young boys, who otherwise rather gave up their supper than the theater, stopped going evening after evening. They felt convinced that eventually

they would compel Don Antonio to arrange everything as before.

But Don Antonio belonged to a family of artists. His father and his brother owned marionette-theaters, his brothers-in-law, all his relatives were specialists. And Don Antonio understands his art. He can change his voice infinitely, he can at the same time maneuver a whole army of dolls, and he knows by heart the text to whole cycles of plays founded on the chronicles of Carolus Magnus.

And Don Antonio's artist-soul became wounded. He would not be prevailed upon to take back the blind players. He wanted people to come to his theater for his sake, and not on account of the musicians.

He changed, and began to give grand plays showily mounted. But it was in vain.

There is a play called "The Knight Errant's Death" which treats of Roland's struggle with Ronceval. It requires such an elaborate mechanism that a marionette-theater has to be kept closed two days in order to properly arrange it. The people are so fond of it that double the usual prices could be charged and still full houses be secured for at least a whole month. Don Antonio now brought out this play, but he did not need to give it, he had no spectators.

After this Don Antonio was broken-hearted. He tried to get back Father Elia, and Brother Tommaso, but these, knowing now what they were worth to him, asked such prices that it would have been ruin to pay them. It was impossible to come to any agreement.

In the little dwelling back of the marionette-thea-

ter one lived as in a besieged fortress. There was nothing else to do but starve.

Donna Emilia and Don Antonio were both young and happy people. Now, however, they laughed no more. It was not so much want that affected them, but Don Antonio was a proud man, and he could not bear the thought that his art could no longer draw spectators.

Then, as has been said, Donna Emilia went down to San Pasquale's church to ask the saint for advice. It had been her intention to repeat nine prayers to the large stone image which stood outside the church, and then depart, but before she had commenced to pray she had noticed that the church-door stood open. "Why is the door of San Pasquale's church, open? That has never happened in my days," said Donna Emilia. And she entered the church.

Nothing was to be seen there, but Fra Felice's beloved image and the large box for offerings. And the image was so beautiful in its crown and its rings, that Donna Emilia was tempted to approach quite close to it. And gazing into its eyes, it seemed to her so sweet and comforting that she knelt down before it and prayed. And she promised that if it would help her and Don Antonio in their need, she would deposit the whole income of one evening in the large box hanging beside it.

Her prayer ended, Donna Emilia hid herself behind the church door and tried to catch what the passers-by were saying. Because, if the image was willing to help her, it would now let her hear a word which would tell her what she must do.

She had not remained there two minutes before

old Assunta from the cathedral steps passed by, in company with Donna Pepa and Donna Tura. And she heard Assunta, in her solemn voice, say: "It was the year that I heard 'The Ancient Martyrdom' for the first time." Donna Emilia heard this quite distinctly. Assunta actually said "The Ancient Martyrdom."

To Donna Emilia it seemed as though she would never reach home, as though her limbs were unable to carry her fast enough. It seemed as though the road had become much longer. When at length she saw the theater, with its red lanterns under the roof and the large ornate bills, it was as though she had walked many miles.

As she entered, Don Antonio sat with his great head resting in his hands and staring straight at the table. It was pitiful to look at Don Antonio. During these last weeks he had commenced to lose his hair. On the top of his head it was so thin that the scalp shone through. But that was not strange when it was considered what troubles had come upon him. While Donna Emilia had been away, he had taken out all his dolls and examined them. He did that every day now. He would sit looking at the doll who played Armida. Was she then no longer beautiful and alluring? he would ask. And he tried to furbish up Roland's sword or Charles the Great's crown. Donna Emilia saw that he had again gilded the emperor's crown. That was for the fifth time at least. He had, however, ceased in the middle of his work and sat down to brood. He had himself become aware of it. It was not gilt that he lacked, it was an idea.

As Donna Emilia entered the room, she stretched forth her hands toward her husband.

"Look at me, Don Antonio Greco," she said, "I carry in my hands golden vessels full of royal figs!"

And she related how she had prayed, and what she had promised, and what she had been advised.

As she said this to Don Antonio he sprang from the chair. His arms dropped stiff at his sides, and his hair rose on his head. He was greatly terrified. "The Ancient Martyrdom," he exclaimed. "The Ancient Martyrdom!"

For "The Ancient Martyrdom" is a mystery, which in its day was played all over Sicily. It supplanted all other oratorios and mysteries, and was played every year, in ever city, for several hundred years. It was the greatest day of the year when "The Ancient Martyrdom" was given. Now, however, it is no longer played, and the people remember it only as a myth.

In past days it was even played at the marionette-theater, but now it is considered too old-fashioned, and has probably not been played for thirty years.

Don Antonio began to shout and yell at Donna Emilia because she tormented him with such absurdities. He struggled against her, as against a demon who had come to seize upon him. "It was amazing, it was heart-rending," he said. But Donna Emilia remained calm and let him rave. She only said that what she had heard was the will of God.

Don Antonio began to waver. The grand idea gradually gained supremacy over him. Nothing had been so loved and played in Sicily as that. And dwelt there not constantly the same people on that

noble isle? Loved they not the same earth, the same mountains, the same sky as their forefathers had loved? Why should they not also be able to love The Ancient Martyrdom?"

He opposed it as long as he could. He said to Donna Emilia that it would be too costly. Where should he get apostles with long hair and beard? He had no table for the Lord's Supper, he had no machinery necessary for the entry and the carrying of the cross.

Donna Emilia, however, saw that he would give in, and before evening he actually went to Fra Felice and renewed his wife's promise to place the earnings of one evening in the little image's alms box, if this proved to be good advice.

Fra Felice told Donna Micaela about the promise, and she felt pleased, and at the same time anxious about how this would turn out.

Round about the city it became known that Don Antonio was setting up "The Ancient Martyrdom," and people laughed at him. Don Antonio had lost his senses.

To be sure they would have liked to see "The Ancient Martyrdom" if they could see it played as in former days. They would have liked to see it played as in Aci, when the nobles of the city personated kings and mercenaries, and tradesmen appeared in the characters of Jews and apostles, and when so many scenes from the Old Testament were added, that the play lasted a whole day.

They would also have liked to experience once more those glorious days in Castelbuoco, when the whole city was transformed into a Jerusalem. There

the play was given in such a way that Jesus came riding into the city and was met at the city gate by people carrying palms. There the church represented the temple of Jerusalem and the court-house Pilate's palace. There Peter warmed himself at a fire in the rectory yard, the crucifixion took place on a mountain above the city, and Mary sought the body of her Son in the grottos of the Syndic's garden.

When they remembered such things, how could they be satisfied with seeing "The Ancient Martyrdom" at Don Antonio's theater?

But in spite of all this Don Antonio worked with the greatest zeal in making actors, and arranging the great machinery.

And behold, after a few days, Battista, who painted signs, came and presented him with an advertisement. It had pleased him to hear that Don Antonio intended to play "The Ancient Martyrdom." He had seen it in his youth, and it had afforded him much joy.

Accordingly, at the corner of the theater could now be read, in great letters: "The Ancient Martyrdom, or Adam Resurrected, tragedy in three acts, by Cavaliere Filippo Orioles."

Don Antonio wondered and wondered what the public mind would be. But donkey boys and apprentices, passing by his theater, read the bill with a scoffing laugh. Don Antonio's prospects were by no means bright, nevertheless he still continued to work faithfully.

When the appointed evening came, and "The Martyrdom" was about to be given, no one was more

anxious than Donna Micaela. "Will the little image help me?" she was asking herself continually.

She sent out her maid, Lucia, to spy. Were there groups of boys outside the theater? Did it look as though there would be any people? Lucia might very well go up to Donna Emilia, who sat at the ticket-hole, and inquire of her what the outlook was.

But when Lucia returned she had no hope whatever to give. There was no crowd outside the theater. The boys were determined to crush Don Antonio.

Towards eight o'clock, Donna Micaela could no longer remain at home. She persuaded her father to accompany her to the theater. She knew well enough that a signora had never set foot inside Don Antonio's theater, but she must see how this would come off. It would be such an enormous success for her railroad if Don Antonio succeeded.

When Donna Micaela arrived at the theater, it wanted a few minutes of eight. And Donna Emilia had not sold a single ticket.

She was not downcast, however. "Walk in, Donna Micaela!" she said. "We shall play at all events. It is so beautiful. Don Antonio will play for you and your father and myself. It is the loveliest he has ever given."

Donna Micaela entered a small auditorium. It was draped in mourning just as the great theaters always were in former days, when "The Ancient Martyrdom" was played. There were dark silver fringed curtains around the scene. And the small benches were covered with black cloth.

Immediately after Donna Micaela had entered, Don Antonio's bushy eyebrows were seen in a little

hole in the curtain, "Donna Micaela," he cried, just as Donna Emilia had done before. "We shall play notwithstanding. It is so beautiful. It needs no spectators."

At that moment Donna Emilia came herself and opened the door and, courtesying, held it wide open. It was the rector, Don Matteo, that came.

"What do you say of me, Donna Micaela?" he said laughing. "But you understand, it is 'The Ancient Martyrdom.' I saw it in my youth at the grand opera in Palermo, and I believe it was that old play that made me a priest."

The next time the door opened, it was Father Elia and Brother Tommaso, who entered with their violins under their arms, groping their way to their accustomed places as calmly as though there had never been any wrangling with Don Antonio.

The door opened again. It was an old woman from the alley above the little Moor's house. She was dressed in black, and made the sign of the cross as she entered.

After her came four or five old women, and Donna Micaela looked quite indignantly at them, as they gradually filled the theater. She knew that Don Antonio would not be satisfied before he had again his own audience, before he had his beloved headstrong boys to play for.

Suddenly she heard a storm or thunder. The doors flew wide open, all rushed in at the same time. It was the boys. They took their accustomed places as confidently as though they were entering their home.

They looked at each other, somewhat abashed. But it had been impossible for them to see one old

woman after the other entering their theater and see what was being played for them. It had been entirely impossible to see the whole street full of old distaff spinners leisurely wending their way towards the theater. And so they had rushed in.

But hardly had these young people taken their places, before they noticed that they were in the presence of a disciplinarian. Ah! "The Ancient Martyrdom," "The Ancient Martyrdom!"

It was not given as in Aci and in Castelbuoco. It was not played as at the opera in Palermo, it was only played by wretched marionettes with immovable faces and stiff bodies, yet the ancient play had not lost its power.

Donna Micaela noticed it in the second act, during the Lord's Supper. The boys began to hate Judas. They showered threats and abuse upon him.

As the tale of suffering continued, they removed their hats and folded their hands. They sat perfectly still, their beautiful brown eyes turned towards the stage. Now and then a few tears fell. Now and then a hand was clenched in indignation.

Don Antonio spoke with tears in his voice, Donna Emilia was on her knees in the doorway. Don Matteo gazed with a gentle smile at the little dolls, and recalled the glorious representation in Palermo, which had made him a priest.

But when Jesus was taken prisoner and tortured, the young felt ashamed of themselves. They, too, had been capable of hate and persecution. They were like those Pharisees and those Romans. It was a shame to think of it. They hoped Don Antonio would forgive them.

V

THE LADY WITH THE IRON RING

DONNA MICAELA often remembered a poor little seamstress, whom she had seen in Catania. She had lived in the house beside Palazzo Palmeri, and she had always sat in the porch with her work, so that Donna Micaela had seen her a thousand times. Sitting there, it had been her wont to sing, and it seemed she had known but one canzonette. Always, always she sang the same song.

"I have cut off a lock of my dark hair," she had sung. "I have unloosed my glossy black braid, and cut off a lock of my hair. I have done it to gladden my friend, who is sad. Ah, my beloved is in prison, my beloved will never more wind my hair round his fingers. I have sent him a lock of my hair to remind him of those soft fetters, which will encircle him no more."

Donna Micaela remembered that song well. It was as if it had echoed through her whole childhood, betokening all the suffering that awaited her.

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Donna Micaela often sat on the stone steps of San Pasquale's church. She would then see marvelous events taking place over yonder on the wonderland Etna.

Over the black lava fields a railroad train came gliding along on newly laid shining rails. It was a festal train. There were flags along the whole road, there were wreaths on the cars, the seats were covered with purple cushions. At every station people stood and cried in exultation : " Long live the king, long live the queen, long live the new railroad ! "

She heard it distinctly, for she too was on the train. Ah, how honored, how honored she was ! She was called into the presence of the king and queen, and they thanked her for the new railroad. " Request a favor of us, princess," said the king giving her the title, which the ladies of the Alagona race had borne in days of old.

" Sire," she answered, as one answers in fairy tales, " grant freedom to the last Alagona ! "

And it was vouchsafed her. The king could not say no to a prayer from her, who had built that excellent railroad, which would enrich all Etna.

. . . . . .

When Donna Micaela lifted her arm, so that the sleeve of her dress glided back, it was noticed that she wore as a bracelet, a ring of rusty iron. She had found it on the street, forced it over her hand, and wore it now always. As soon as she saw it or touched it she grew pale, and her eyes no longer saw anything of the world around her. She saw only a prison, such as Foscari's in the doge's palace at Venice. It was a dark, narrow cell, light filtered in through a grated aperture, and from the wall hung a large bunch of chains encircling the prisoner's legs, arms and neck like snakes.

May saints perform miracles ! May people toil !

May she herself gain such honor that she may be able to beg freedom for her prisoner! He will die, if she does not make haste. May the iron ring constantly gnaw at her arm, so that she may not for a moment forget him.

VI

FRA FELICE'S TESTAMENT

As Donna Emilia opened the ticket-hole to sell tickets for the second performance of "The Ancient Martyrdom," the people were standing in line to get places; the following evening the theater was so crowded that people fainted in the crush, and the third evening people came both from Adernó and Paternó to see the beloved tragedy. Don Antonio foresaw that he could play it for a whole month for double the usual prices, and with two representations every evening.

How happy they were, he and Donna Emilia, and with what joy and gratefulness they put twenty-five lire into the little image's box!

In Diamante this event aroused a good deal of astonishment, and many people came to Donna Elisa to learn if she believed that the saints wished that they should aid Donna Micaela.

"Have you heard, Donna Elisa," they would say, "that Don Antonio Greco has been helped by the Christ-child at San Pasquale's, because he had promised to give the income of one evening to Donna Micaela's railroad?"

But when asked about this, Donna Elisa pressed her lips together and looked as though she could think of nothing but her embroidery.

Even Fra Felice came in and told her about the two miracles the image had already performed.

"Signorina Tottenham was very stupid to give up the image, it being such a miracle-worker," said Donna Elisa.

And so it seemed to all. Had not Signorina Tottenham owned the image many years, and she had never noticed anything. It was no miracle-worker. That was only a coincidence.

It was unfortunate, that Donna Elisa would not believe. She was the only one of the ancient Alagona family now left in Diamante. The people were influenced by her more than they themselves were aware of. Had Donna Elisa believed, the whole city would have helped Donna Micaela.

But the drawback was that Donna Elisa could not believe that God and the saints were willing to aid her sister-in-law.

She had watched her ever since the festival of San Sebastiano. As soon as any one spoke of Gaetano, she grew pale and appeared quite wretched. Her face became as a transgressor's, when his heart is torn with remorse.

Donna Elisa sat thinking of this one morning, and she was so absorbed that she suffered the needle to drop. "Donna Micaela is no Etna woman," she said to herself. "She sides with the rulers, she is glad that Gaetano is in prison."

Out on the street some men came just then, carrying a litter. On it lay piled up a lot of church decorations. There were chandeliers and tabernacles and reliquaries. Donna Elisa glanced up for a moment, then went back to her own thoughts.

"She would not allow me to decorate the Alagona house for the feast of San Sebastiano," she thought. "She did not wish the saint should help Gaetano."

Two men now came dragging along a rattling hand-cart. On it lay a whole mountain of red hangings, richly embroidered antependier and altar-pieces in broad gilt frames.

Donna Elisa struck out with her hand as though dispelling all doubts. What had happened could not be a real miracle. The saints were well aware that Diamante could not afford to build a railroad.

Now a yellow van passed by, packed with music stands, missals, hassocks and confessionals.

Donna Elisa awoke. She looked out between the rosaries, hanging in festoons across the window pane.

Why that was the third load of church things. Was Diamante being plundered? Had the Saracens come to the city?

She took up her position in the doorway, that she might see better. Again came a litter, and on it lay mourning wreaths of sheet-iron, grave-slabs with long inscriptions and escutcheons, such as are hung up in the churches in memory of the dead.

Donna Elisa questioned the bearers, and was informed as to what was being done. The church of Santa Lucia in Gesù was being evacuated. The Syndic and the city-junta had ordered that it should be transformed into a theater.

After the insurrection, a new syndic was installed in Diamante. He was a young man from Rome. He did not know the city, but nevertheless was glad to do something for it. He had proposed, at the city-junta, that Diamante should provide itself

with a new theater in the same way as Taormina and other cities. This could be done by simply converting one of the churches into a play-house. Surely Diamante had more than enough with five city-churches and seven monastery churches, it could very well afford to spare one of them.

Now there was Santa Lucia in Gesù, the church of the Jesuits. The monastery surrounding it was already turned into barracks, and the church was as good as deserted. That would make such an excellent theater.

This the new syndic had proposed, and the city-junta had agreed to.

When Donna Elisa heard what was taking place, she threw over her her mantilla and veil, and hastened to the Lucia church as speedily as though she were hastening to the house of one dying.

"What will become of the blind?" thought Donna Elisa. "How will they be able to live without Santa Lucia in Gesù?"

As Donna Elisa came to the little, quiet court, around which the Jesuits' long, unhandsome monastery buildings are erected, she saw, on the broad stone step which runs along the whole front of the church, a row of ragged children and shaggy dogs. All these were guides of the blind, and they cried and whined, with all their might.

"What is the matter with you all?" asked Donna Elisa.

"They wish to take our church away from us," wailed the children, whereupon all the dogs howled more pitifully than before, for blind people's dogs are almost like human beings.

At the church door Donna Elisa met Master Pampilio's wife, Donna Concetta. "Ah, Donna Elisa," she said, "never in all your life have you seen anything so terrible. You'll do best not to go in."

But Donna Elisa passed on.

In the church she first saw nothing but a white cloud of dust. The strokes of hammers, however, echoed through the cloud, for some laborers were pulling down an immense stone knight resting in one of the window niches.

"O Lord," said Donna Elisa folding her hands, "they are tearing down Sor Arrigo!" And she thought of how peacefully he had lain there in his niche. Every time she had seen him, she had wished that she could be so separated from troubles and changeability as old Sor Arrigo.

In the Lucia church there was still a large sepulchral monument. It represented an old Jesuit reclining on a black marble sarcophagus, with scourge in hand, and the cowl drawn far down over the forehead. He was called Father Succi, and it was customary to frighten the children in Diamante with him.

Donna Elisa wondered if they would dare to touch Father Succi also. And she groped her way through the lime dust up to the chancel where stood the sarcophagus, to see if they had dared to move the old Jesuit.

But Father Succi still lay on his bed of stone. He lay there, dark and stern as he had been in life, and it might almost be believed that he was still alive. Had the doctor been there and a table with medicine bottles and burning candles beside the bed, one

might have thought that Father Succi lay ill in the chancel of his church, awaiting his last hour.

The blind sat round him, rocking their bodies to and fro in silent grief. There were the two women from the hotel, Donna Pepa and Donna Tura, there was old mother Saredda, who ate the bread of charity at the house of Syndic Voltaro, there were blind beggars and blind singers, blind of all ages and conditions. All the blind of Diamante were there, and in Diamante there are a great many who will never more behold the sunlight.

All these sat for the most part silent, but now and then one of them would burst out into a heart-rending cry. Now one, now another, would grope his way to the monk, Father Succi, and throw himself, loudly weeping, upon him.

And the rector and Father Rossi from the Franciscan monastery went about seeking to comfort the distressed, making it seem still more like a death-bed.

Donna Elisa became deeply affected. Ah, how often had she not seen these people happy in their court, and to think that she now should find them in such dire misery! They had drawn tears from her eyes when they sang dirges over her husband, Signor Antonelli, and over her brother, Don Ferrante.

Old Mother Saredda began speaking with Donna Elisa.

"I knew of nothing, when I came, Donna Elisa," said the old woman. "I left my dog outside on the step and entered through the church door. I stretched out my arm to push aside the portière! but the portière was gone. I put my foot down, as

though there were steps to tread upon below the threshold, but there was no step. I stretched forth my hand to take holy water, I knelt in passing the high altar, and I listened to hear the little bell, which used to ring when Father Rossi comes to mass. Donna Elisa, there was no holy water, no altar, no bell-ringing, there was nothing."

"Poor thing, poor thing," said Donna Elisa.

"I then heard hammering and knocking up in one of the windows. 'What are you doing to Sor Arrigo?' I cry, for I hear immediately that it is in Sor Arrigo's window.

"'We are taking him away,' they reply.

"Just then, however, the rector Don Matteo comes, takes me by the hand, and explains everything to me. And I almost become angry with the rector when he tells me that it is for a theater. They need our church for a theater!

"'Where is Father Succi?' I ask. 'Is Father Succi still left?' And he leads me to Father Succi. He is obliged to lead me, for I cannot find the way. Since they have taken away all the chairs and hassocks and rugs and platforms and loose steps, I cannot find the way. Before I found my way here as easily as you."

"The rector will provide you with another church," said Donna Elisa.—"Donna Elisa," said the old woman, "what is it you say? You might as well say, that the rector can give us our sight. Can Don Matteo give us a church where we see, as we could see in this? Over there, Donna Elisa, stood an altar, the flowers on it were as red as Etna at sunset, and we saw it. We counted sixteen wax-lights over the

high altar on Sundays, and thirty during feast-days. We could see Father Rossi when he said mass here. What shall we do in another church, Donna Elisa? We cannot see at all there. They have extinguished the light of our eyes anew."

Donna Elisa's heart became as warm as if molten lava had flowed across it. Surely this was a great wrong inflicted upon these blind.

Donna Elisa went to Don Matteo.

"Reverence," she said, "have you spoken to the syndic?"

"Ah, Donna Elisa," said Don Matteo, "it is better that you speak with him than I."

"Reverence, the syndic is a stranger. He may, perhaps, not have heard about the blind."

"Signor Voltaro has been to him, Father Rossi has been to him, and even I, even I. All the answer he gave was, that he could not alter what had been decided by the city-junta. You know very well, Donna Elisa, that the city-junta can retract nothing. If it has decided that your cat shall say mass at the cathedral, it cannot change it."

Suddenly there arose a great commotion in the church. A tall, blind man entered. "Father Elia," was the whisper, "Father Elia."

Father Elia was alderman for the blind singers' guild, which used to assemble here. He had long white hair and beard, and was as beautiful as one of the holy patriarchs.

Like all the rest he, too, went forward to Father Succi. He sat down beside him, leaning his head against the coffin.

Donna Elisa went up to Father Elia and spoke to

him. "Father Elia," she said, "*you* ought to go to the syndic."

"Think you I have waited for you to tell me that? Don't you know that my first thought was to go to the syndic?" He spoke sternly and distinctly, so that the laborers ceased hammering, and listened, thinking that some one had commenced to preach.

"I have told him that we blind singers form a guild, and that the Jesuits opened their church for us three hundred years ago and gave us the right to assemble here to choose new members, and hear new songs.

"And I told him that we were thirty in the guild and that the holy Lucia is our patron saint; that we never sing on the streets, but only in courtyards and indoors, and that we sing saintly legends and also dirges, but never a flippant song, and that the Jesuit, Father Succi, opened the church to us for the reason that the blind are Our Lord's singers.

"I told him that some of us are recitatori, who can recite the ancient songs, and others are trovatori, who invent new ones. I told him that we gladden many on this noble isle. I asked him why he would not suffer us to live. For the homeless one must perish.

"I told him that it is our custom to wander from city to city all over the great Etna, but the Lucia-church, in Diamante, is our home, and here mass is said for us every morning. Why did he wish to deny us the comfort of the Word of God?

"I told him that once the Jesuits changed their mood toward us, and wanted to drive us away from their church, but they did not succeed. We received

a letter from the Viceroy entitling us to hold our meetings in Santa Lucia in Gesù for all time. And I showed him the letter."

"What did he answer then?"

"He laughed at me."

"Can none of the other gentlemen help you?"

"I have been to them, Donna Elisa. The whole morning I have been sent from Herodes to Pilatus."

"Father Elia," said Donna Elisa, lowering her voice, "have you forgotten to implore the saints?"

"I have implored both the black Madonna and San Sebastiano, and Santa Lucia. I have prayed to as many as I was able to mention by name."

"Do you believe, Father Elia," said Donna Elisa, lowering her voice still more, "that Don Antonio Greco received aid because he promised money for Donna Micaela's railroad?"

"I have no money to give," said the old man disconsolately.

"You ought, nevertheless, to think of it, Father Elia," said Donna Elisa, since you are in such sore distress.

"You ought to try and promise the Christ-child that you yourself, and all belonging to your guild, will speak and sing about the railroad and persuade people to contribute to it, if you are allowed to keep your church.

"We don't know if it avails, yet you ought to try everything, Father Elia. To promise costs nothing."

"I will promise anything for your sake," said the old man.

Again he leaned his blind head against the black coffin, and Donna Elisa understood that he had

made the promise in order that he might be left alone with his sorrow.

"Shall I repeat your promise to the Christ-image?" she said.

"Do as you please, Donna Elisa," said the old man.

. . . . . .

That same day, old Fra Felice had risen at about five o'clock in the morning and begun to sweep his church. He felt perfectly strong and well, but all at once it seemed to him as if San Pasquale with the bag of stones, who sat outside the church-door, must have something to say to him. He went out to him. Nothing, however, was the matter with San Pasquale. Just then the sun rose behind Etna and down the dark side of the mountain streamed its rays, variegated as harp strings. When the rays reached old Fra Felice's old church, they tinted it red, the old barbaric pillars supporting the canopy over the image, and San Pasquale with the bag of stones, and even Fra Felice himself, became rosy red. "We look like young boys," thought the old man. "We have still a long series of years to live."

But as he was about to go back into the church, he felt a severe pressure above the heart, and it occurred to him that San Pasquale had called him out to bid him farewell. At the same time his limbs grew so heavy that he could scarcely move them. He felt no pain, but a weariness which could signify nothing but death. He was barely able to put away the dust brush behind the door of the sacristy; he then dragged himself up to the chancel, laid himself down on the platform in front of the high altar and wrapped his gown about him.

It was as if the image of Christ had nodded to him and said: "Now I need thee, Fra Felice." He lay there nodding back. "I am ready. I shall not forsake thee."

It was only to lie and wait, and to Fra Felice that seemed delightful. He had never before, during his whole life, had time to feel how tired he was. Now at last he could rest. The image would no doubt maintain the church and the monastery without him.

He lay there smiling at the thought of San Pasquale having called him out to say good morning to him.

Thus lay Fra Felice, until the day was far advanced, dozing most of the time. No one was with him, and he began to feel that it would never do to steal out of the world thus. It was as if he were defrauding some one of something. That woke him again and again. He certainly ought to have the priests, but how should he get word to them.

While he lay there, it seemed to him that he dwindled together more and more. Each time he woke it seemed to him that he had grown smaller. It was as if he were vanishing entirely. He certainly could wind the gown around him four times now.

He probably would have had to die quite alone, if Donna Elisa had not come to implore the little image to help the blind. She was in a peculiar frame of mind when she came, for she was anxious to obtain succor for the blind; still she did not wish that Donna Micaela's project should be furthered.

As she entered the church, she saw Fra Felice lying on the platform below the altar, and she went forward and knelt beside him.

Fra Felice turned his eyes towards her and smiled: "I shall die," he said hoarsely, but correcting himself he said: "I am permitted to die."

Donna Elisa asked what the matter was, and said she would get help.

"Sit down here," he said, and made a feeble attempt to wipe off the dust on the platform with his sleeve.

Donna Elisa said she would fetch priests and sisters of charity. He seized her skirt and detained her.

"I wish to speak with you first, Donna Elisa."

He spoke with difficulty, gasping for breath between each word. Donna Elisa seated herself beside him and waited.

He lay panting for a while, then a blush spread over his face, his eyes began to beam, and he spoke with ease and fervor.

"Donna Elisa," said Fra Felice, "I have an inheritance to give away. It has troubled me all day. I know not to whom I shall give it."

"Fra Felice," said Donna Elisa, "do not trouble yourself about such things. There is no one to whom a gift is not welcome."

But as Fra Felice was feeling a little stronger now, he wished before deciding about the inheritance, to tell Donna Elisa how good God had been to him.

"Has not the Lord been gracious to me, who has made me a *polacco?*" he said.

"Yes, that indeed is a great gift," said Donna Elisa.

"Only to be an insignificant *polacco* is a great gift," said Fra Felice, "it is particularly useful, since the monastery has been dissolved, and the brothers

are away, or dead. It keeps the knapsack full of bread, without begging for it. It brings smiling faces and reverent greetings. I know of no greater gift for a poor monk, Donna Elisa."

Donna Elisa thought of how venerated and loved Fra Felice had been, because he had been able to predict the number which would come out at the lottery. And Donna Elisa could not but agree with him.

"If I came wandering along the road in the hot sun," said Fra Felice, "the shepherd would come and accompany me long distances, holding his umbrella over me. And when I came down to the laborers in the cool quarry, they shared their bread and bean-soup with me. I have not been afraid of robbers and carabines. The man at the toll-gate has always shut his eyes, as I have passed with my bag. It has been a good gift, Donna Elisa."

"True, true," said Donna Elisa.

"It has not been a difficult office," said Fra Felice. "They consulted with me and I answered them, that was all. They knew that every word has its number, and observing what I said, they played accordingly. I do not know how it was done, Donna Elisa, it was a gift of God."

"The poor will greatly miss you, Fra Felice," said Donna Elisa.

Fra Felice smiled: "They did not trouble themselves about me Sunday and Monday when the drawing of lots had lately taken place," he said. "But on Thursday and Friday and on Saturday morning they came, since the drawing was every Saturday."

Donna Elisa began to feel disturbed, because the dying one thought of nothing but that. Suddenly

there rose in her memory both this one and that one, who had lost at the lottery, and she remembered several who had gambled away all they had. She wished to lead his thoughts away from this sinful lottery affair.

"You said you wished to speak about your testament, Fra Felice."

"It is because I have so many friends, that it is difficult for me to know to whom I shall give the inheritance. Shall I give it to those who have baked sweet cakes for me, or to those who have offered me artichokes, fried in fresh oil? Or shall I give it to the sisters of charity, who nursed me when I was ill?"

"Have you much to give away, Fra Felice?"

"It will suffice, Donna Elisa, it will suffice."

Fra Felice seemed again to grow worse: he lay silent, breathing heavily.

"I should also have liked to give it to all the poor wandering monks, who have lost their monasteries," he whispered.

After reflecting a moment, he said, "I should also have liked to give it to the kind old man in Rome. He who watches over us all."

"Are you so rich, Fra Felice?" said Donna Elisa.

"It will suffice, Donna Elisa, it will suffice."

He closed his eyes and rested a while, then he said:

"I will give it to all, Donna Elisa."

That thought gave him new strength, a faint blush spread over his cheeks, and he raised himself on his elbow.

"Look here, Donna Elisa," he said, and, thrusting his hand within his gown, he drew forth a sealed envelope, which he handed her. "You must go and give that to the syndic—to the syndic, in Diamante."

"Here, Donna Elisa," said Fra Felice, "here are the five numbers which win next Saturday. They have been revealed to me, and I have written them down. And the syndic shall take the figures and placard them on the Roman Gate, where everything of importance is advertised. And he shall let the people know that that is my testament, my gift to all. Five winning numbers, a whole quintus, Donna Elisa!"

Donna Elisa took the envelope and promised to give it to the syndic. She could not refuse, for Fra Felice had now but a few moments more to live.

"Now, when Saturday comes," said Fra Felice, "there are many who will remember Fra Felice.—'I wonder if old Fra Felice will deceive us?' they will ask. 'I wonder if it can be possible, that we shall win a whole quintus?'

"On Saturday night the drawing of lots takes place on the balcony of the court-house in Catania, Donna Elisa. The lottery-wheel and table are carried out, the lottery agents come, and the sweet little orphan. And one number after the other is dropped into fortune's wheel, until all are there, the whole hundred.

"All the people, however, stand below, trembling in expectation, as the ocean trembles beneath the tempest. All the people from Diamante will be there, and they will stand quite pale and scarcely

dare to look each other in the face. Before they have believed, but not now. Now they think that old Fra Felice has deceived them. No one dares entertain the least hope.

"Then the first number is drawn, and that is right. Ah, Donna Elisa, they will be so amazed that they almost forget to break out into exultation. Because they have all expected to be disappointed. When the second figure is drawn there is a dead silence. Then comes the third. The lottery gentlemen will be astonished that all are so quiet. 'To-day they win nothing,' they will say. 'To-day the state will reap a good profit.' The fourth number is drawn. The little orphan takes up the roll out of the wheel, and the marker opens the roll and shows the number. Down among the people it is almost ghastly, no one is able to say a word, so great is their happiness. Then the last figure is drawn. Donna Elisa, such shouting and rejoicing, they fall sobbing into one another's arms. They are rich. All Diamante is rich——"

Donna Elisa had held her arm under Fra Felice's head and supported him, while he had gasped out all this. Now, all of a sudden, his head dropped back. Old Fra Felice was dead.

. . . . . .

While Donna Elisa had been with old Fra Felice, many of the people in Diamante had begun to worry about the blind. Not exactly the men, for the greater part of them were out in the fields working, but the women.

They had come in great numbers to Santa Lucia to comfort the blind, and finally, when about four

hundred women had gathered together, it had occurred to them that they ought to go and speak to the syndic.

They had marched up to the market-place and called the syndic. He had stepped out on the court-house balcony, and they had solicited for the blind.

The syndic was a handsome and amiable man. He had answered them kindly, but he would not yield.

He could not repeal what had been decided at the city-junta.

The women, however, were determined that it should be repealed,and they remained in the market-place. The syndic went back into the court-house, but they stood outside, calling and entreating. They intended to remain until he had conceded.

While this was going on, Donna Elisa came to deliver Fra Felice's testament to the syndic. She was deeply grieved over all this misery, but at the same time she felt a kind of grim satisfaction, because she had received no aid from the Christ-child. Was not that what she had always believed? The saints were not willing to help Donna Micaela.

It was a pretty gift indeed, which she had received at San Pasquale's church! The blind were not helped by it, and besides might it not ruin the whole city? The little the people still owned would now go to the lottery-collector, and then would begin an endless borrowing and pawning.

The syndic received Donna Elisa immediately, and was just as calm and courteous as always, in spite of the women's cries outside, the groans of the blind in the waiting-room, and a continuous stream of people running in and out all day.

"In what can I serve you, Signora Antonelli?" he said. Donna Elisa gazed around, wondering to whom he was speaking. Then she told about the testament.

The syndic was neither frightened nor astonished.

"That is very interesting," he said, and stretched out his hand for the paper.

But Donna Elisa held the envelope tightly and asked, "Signor Syndic, what do you intend to do with it; do you intend to post it on the Roman gate?"

"Yes, what else can I do, signora. It is a dead man's last will."

Donna Elisa would have liked to tell him what a terrible testament it was, but she checked herself, and began to talk about the blind.

"Father Succi, who ordained that the blind should be allowed to stay in his church, is also a dead man," she remarked.

"Signora Antonelli, you too," said the syndic quite gently. "It certainly was a mistake, but why did no one tell us that the Lucia church was a refuge for the blind. Now since it has once been decided, I cannot annul the resolution, I cannot."

"But their rights and letters patent, Signor Syndic."

"Their rights are no longer valid. They are in force for the monastery of the Jesuits, but such a monastery exists no longer. And tell me, Signora Antonelli, what will become of me, were I to yield?"

"They will love you, as a benign man."

"Signora, I shall be considered a weak man, and every day I shall have four hundred laborers' wives outside the court-house, begging now for one thing,

now for another. Why, I have only to hold out one day, and to-morrow it will be forgotten."

"To-morrow!" said Donna Elisa. "We shall never forget it."

The syndic smiled, and Donna Elisa saw that he believed he knew the people of Diamante much better than she.

"You believe that this is matter of special concern to them?"

"I do indeed, Signor Syndic. The syndic laughed.

"Give me the envelope, signora."

He took it and went out on the balcony.

He began to speak to the women. "I wish to tell you," he said, "that I have just now learned, that old Fra Felice is dead, and that he has left you all a testament. He has written down five numbers, which, it is said,will win at the lottery next Saturday, and these he gives to you. No one has yet seen them. They lie here in this envelope, and that is still unopened."

He was silent a moment, in order that the women might have time to think over what he had said.

"Instantaneously they commenced to cry: "The numbers, the numbers!" The syndic motioned to them to be quiet.

"Reflect," he said, "that Fra Felice could not possibly know what numbers will come out next Saturday. If you make use of these numbers, you may lose. And we can ill afford to become poorer than we already are here in Diamante. Therefore I beg of you, let me destroy the testament, without any one having seen it."

"The numbers," cried the women, "out with the numbers."

"If I am allowed to destroy the testament," said the syndic, "I promise you that the blind shall have back their church."

It became quiet in the market-place. Donna Elisa, who had been sitting in the council-room, rose and clutched the back of her chair with both hands.

"I allow you to choose between the church and the numbers," said the syndic.

"O Lord in heaven!" sighed Donna Elisa, "is he a devil, who tempts the people in that way!"

"We have been poor heretofore," one woman cried, "we can remain poor."

"We shall not choose Barrabas instead of Christ," cried another.

The syndic took a match-box out of his pocket, lit a match and carried it slowly up to the testament.

The women stood still and saw Fra Felice's five winning numbers destroyed. The church of the blind was saved.

"It is a miracle," whispered old Donna Elisa, "they all believe in Fra Felice, and they permit his numbers to burn. It is a miracle."

. . . . . .

Later in the afternoon Donna Elisa sat again in her shop at her embroidery frame. She looked old, and wasted and broken down. It was not the Donna Elisa one was accustomed to see there, it was a poor, old, forsaken woman.

She drew her needle listlessly out of the cloth, and as she put it down again, she was slow and uncertain. She had difficulty in preventing the tears from dropping on the embroidery and ruining it.

Donna Elisa had a great sorrow. To-day she had lost Gaetano forever. There was no longer any hope of getting him back.

The saints had gone over to the opponent's side. They performed miracles in order to help Donna Micaela. No one could doubt that it was a miracle that had happened. The poor women of Diamante could not have stood still while Fra Felice's numbers were burning, had they not been bound by a miracle.

That the kind saints were helping Donna Micaela, who did not like Gaetano, made a poor mortal so old and wicked.

The door-bell jingled violently and Donna Elisa rose, from force of habit. It was Donna Micaela that came. She was glad, and came forward to Donna Elisa with outstretched hands. But Donna Elisa turned away. She could not press her hand.

Donna Micaela was in ecstasy. "Ah, Donna Elisa, you have helped my railroad. What shall I say? How shall I thank you?"

"You need not thank me, sister-in-law!"

"Donna Elisa!"

"If the saints wish to give us a railroad, it must be because Diamante needs it, and not because they love *you*."

Donna Micaela shrunk back. Now at last she thought she understood why Donna Elisa was angry with her. "If Gaetano were home," she said. She stood pressing her hand against her heart and groaning. "If Gaetano were home he would not let you treat me so cruelly."

"Gaetano, would not Gaetano?"

"No, he would not. Even though you are angry with me, because I loved Gaetano while my husband lived, you would not dare to reproach me with it were he home."

Donna Elisa raised her eyebrows slightly. "Do you think that he could prevail upon me to keep silent in regard to such a matter?" she said, and her voice sounded quite strange.

"But, Donna Elisa," Donna Micaela came close up to her and whispered: "Why, it is impossible, quite impossible not to love him. He is beautiful, and he conquers me, and I am afraid of him. You must let me love him."

"Must I?" Donna Elisa looked down, and her tone was curt and harsh.

Donna Micaela was beside herself. "It is I he loves," she said. "It is not Giannita, but I. And you ought to consider me as a daughter, you ought to help me, you ought to be kind to me. And instead you oppose me. You are cruel to me. You do not let me come to you and speak of him. However much I long and however much I work, I am not allowed to tell you about it."

Donna Elisa could hold out no longer. Surely Donna Micaela was nothing but a child, young and foolish and timid as a bird's heart. One who needed to be mothered and taken care of. She felt she must throw her arms about her.

"Why I did not know it, you poor stupid child," she said.

VII

AFTER THE MIRACLE

THE blind singer's guild had a meeting in the Lucia church. Highest up in the chancel behind the altar sat thirty blind men in the Jesuit forefather's sculptured stalls. Most of them were poor, most of them had the beggar's bag and staff at his side.

Great solemnity prevailed among the blind. They fully realized the importance of being members of that holy guild, of that glorious old academy.

Below in the church a suppressed noise was heard now and then. There sat the leaders of the blind, children, dogs and old women, waiting. At times the young began frolicking with each other and with the dogs, but it was immediately quelled and hushed.

The blind, who were trovatori, stood up one after the other and recited new rhymes.

'Ye, who dwell on holy Etna," one of them recited, "ye, who live on the mountain of miracles, arise, give your queen a new adornment! She pines for two long ribbons to enhance her beauty, two long, narrow ribbons of iron to fasten in her mantle. Give this to your mistress, and she shall reward you with riches, she shall give you gold for iron."

" Countless are the treasures which the mighty one will bestow upon them who now befriend her."

"A gentle miracle-worker has come to us," said another. "He stands poor, and humble, in the bare old church, and his crown is of sheet-iron and his diamonds of glass. 'Bestow no offerings upon me, ye poor ones,' he says, 'build no temples to me, ye wretched ones. Your happiness shall be my aim. If riches shines from your humble homes, I sparkle with precious gems; if distress flees from the land, my feet will be clothed in gold shoes covered with pearls."

According as one new rhyme after the other was recited, it was accepted or rejected. The blind proceeded with great rigidity.

The following day they went forth and began to sing the railroad into the hearts of all the Etna people.

. . . . . .

After the miracle about Fra Felice's testament, the people began to give gifts to the railroad. Donna Micaela had soon collected about one hundred lire. Then she and Donna Elisa went one day to Messina to look at the steam tramway which runs between Messina and Pharo. They had no higher thoughts. They would be satisfied with a steam tramway.

"Why need a railroad be so expensive?" said Donna Elisa. "Why, it's just like a common road, with two iron rails on it. But it is the engineers and fine gentlemen, that make the road so expensive. Never mind about engineers, Micaela. Let our clever road-builders, Giovanni and Carmelo, build your railroad."

They inspected carefully the steam tramway to

Pharo, and gained all the knowledge they could. They measured how far it ought to be between the rails, and Donna Micaela drew on a piece of paper how the tracks crossed each other at the stations. It was not difficult. They felt sure that they would be able to get on by themselves.

That day there seemed to be no obstacles. It was not more difficult to build a station than a common house, they said. Besides, a couple of stations was all that was needed. At most of the stopping places a small hood would be sufficient.

If they only could avoid forming a company, taking fine gentlemen into their service, and doing such things which cost money, the railroad would no doubt be brought about. It would not be expensive. Ground it would probably get for nothing. The grand gentlemen who owned the land on Etna would surely see the benefits they would derive from the railroad and allow it to pass free across their ground.

They did not care to have the course laid down beforehand. They would start at Diamante, and proceed little by little till they reached Catania. Why, one had only to begin and lay a little strip each day. That was not so very difficult.

After that journey they commenced to try to build the road alone. Don Ferrante had not left behind a large inheritance for Donna Micaela. It was, however, a good thing, that he had given her a large tract of lava-covered waste ground on Etna. Here Giovanni and Carmelo began to clear for the new railroad.

When this work began, the railroad builders owned

only one hundred lire. But it was the miracle about the testament which had filled them with holy madness.

What a railroad it would be, what a railroad it would be!

Blind singers were share-collectors, and the holy image granted concession, and the old shop-keeper, Donna Elisa, was engineer.

VIII

A JETTATORE

In Catania there was once a man with the evil eye, a jettatore. He was well nigh the most frightful jettatore that had ever been found in Sicily. As soon as he appeared on the street, the people hastened to bend their fingers into the protecting sign. But most frequently that did not help at all. Any one who met him might as well prepare himself for a wretched day. His food would be burned, and the precious old jelly-dish broken, or he would learn that his banker had suspended payment, and that the little note he had written to his friend's wife had got into the wrong hands.

Usually a jettatore is a tall, gaunt fellow with timid eyes and a long nose, which lies and pecks at the upper lip. The parrot-nose is the characteristic feature of the jettatore. Everything, however, changes, nothing occurs permanently. This jettatore was a little fellow with a nose like a San Michale.

Hence it was that he did a great deal more harm than a common jettatore. One is often pricked by a rose but rarely burned by a nettle.

A jettatore ought never to grow up. Only as a child is he happy. Then he still has his mother, and she never sees the evil eye; she never understands

why she pricks her fingers, every time he approaches the sewing-table. She will never feel afraid to kiss him. Although she constantly has sickness in the house, and the servants leave, and friends withdraw, she will never notice anything.

But after the jettatore has come out into the world he is often badly off. First and foremost one must of course think of oneself; one cannot ruin one's whole life by being kind to a jettatore.

There are many jettatores who are priests. That is not strange; the wolf is pleased if he can tear many sheep. They cannot do more harm than if they become priests. One ought only to know how those children fare that they baptize, and the people they marry.

The jettatore here in question became an engineer, and wanted to build railroads. He was employed by the state to aid in the construction of one of its railroads. How could the state know that he was a jettatore? Ah, what misery, what misery! As soon as he began his service on the line, there was nothing but accidents. Earth-slip upon earth-slip in cutting through a hillock, break upon break in laying a bridge. In firing a dynamite cartridge, the workingmen were killed by chips of stone flying about.

The only one who never got hurt was the engineer, the jettatore.

But the wretches who worked under him! They counted their fingers and limbs every evening. "Maybe to-morrow we have lost you," they would say.

One informed the general superintendent, one notified the minister of state. None of them would listen to any complaints. They were too wise and

learned to believe in the evil eye. The workingmen must be more careful. It was their own fault if they got into trouble.

And ballast-cars upset; the engines exploded.

One morning it was whispered that the engineer was gone. He had vanished; no one knew what had become of him. Had some one stabbed him? No, indeed, would any one have dared to stab a jettatore?

But he had actually vanished, and no one saw anything more of him.

It was a few years afterwards that Donna Micaela began to think of building her railroad. And to procure money for it, she wanted to hold a bazar in the great Franciscan monastery outside Diamante.

Out there is a cloister yard surrounded by fine old pillars. Under the arcades Donna Micaela arranged quaint little shops and lotteries, and tiny places of amusement. She hung garlands of Venetian lanterns from pillar to pillar. She piled up great barrels of Etna wine around the monastery well.

While Donna Micaela was at work there, she often conversed with the little Gandolfo, who had become keeper of the monastery after Fra Felice was dead.

One day she let Gandolfo show her the whole monastery. She went all through it, from attic to cellar. And as she beheld the countless little cells with their grated windows, lime-plastered walls and hard wooden benches, an idea occurred to her.

She begged Gandolfo to shut her up in one of the cells and leave her there for five minutes.

"Now I am a prisoner," she said, when she was left alone. She felt the door: she felt the window. She was securely barred up.

This is how it is to be a prisoner! Four bare walls around one, and the silence and chill of the grave.

"Now I will feel as a prisoner feels," she thought.

At the same moment she forgot everything in her fear that Gandolfo might not come to let her out. Why, he might be called away, he might become suddenly ill, he might fall and be mortally injured in one of the dark passages. A great many things might happen to prevent him from coming.

No one, however, knew where she was, no one would seek her in this forgotten cell. Were she left there for one hour only, she would be mad from fright.

She saw before her the hunger, the long hunger. She struggled on through the endless hours of anguish. Ah, how she would listen for footsteps, how she would call!

She would shake the door, she would scrape the mortar off the walls with her nails, she would try and bite the window grating to pieces.

When at last they found her, she would be lying dead on the floor, and traces of how she had tried to force her way out would be found everywhere.

Why didn't Gandolfo come? Now she had been there a quarter of an hour, a half hour. Why did he not come?

She was certain that she had been locked up a whole hour when at last Gandolfo came. Where had he been so long?

He hadn't been long at all. He had only been gone five minutes.

God, O God, such then was captivity, this was

Gaetano's life! She burst into convulsive weeping, when she again beheld the open sky above her.

A little later, as they were standing on an open loggia, Gandolfo pointed out to her a window with blinds and green awnings.

"Does any one live there?" she asked.

"Yes, Donna Micaela."

Gandolfo related that a man lived there, who never went out except at night, a man, who never spoke to any one.

"Is he insane?" asked Donna Micaela.

"O, no, he is as sane as you or I. It is said, however, that he is obliged to hide. He fears the government."

Donna Micaela became very much interested in this man. "What is his name?" he said.

"I call him Signor Alfredo."

"How does he get food?" she asked.

"I prepare his food," said Gandolfo.

"And clothes?"

"I get them for him, I—I also provide him with books and papers."

Donna Micaela was silent a while. "Gandolfo," she said and handed him a rose, which she held in her hand, "lay that on the tray, next time you carry food to your poor prisoner!"

After that Donna Micaela sent almost every day some trifle to the man at the monastery. It might be a flower, a book or some fruit. It was such a pleasure for her. She almost succeeded in fancying that it was Gaetano to whom she was sending all this.

On the day appointed for the fair, Donna Micaela

came to the monastery very early in the morning. "Gandolfo," she said, "go up to your prisoner and ask him if he will come to the feast this evening."

Gandolfo soon returned with the answer. "He thanks you, Donna Micaela," said the boy. "He will come."

She was surprised, for she had hardly believed that he would venture out. She had only wished to show him a kindness.

Something made Donna Micaela look up. She was standing in the monastery courtyard, and a window was thrown open in one of the buildings above her. Donna Micaela saw a middle-aged man of pleasing appearance standing there looking down upon her.

"There he is, Donna Micaela," said Gandolfo.

She was happy. It was as if she had rescued and redeemed this man. And it was more than that. People devoid of imagination, will not understand it. But Donna Micaela went the whole day trembling and longing. She was thinking of how she should be dressed. It was as if she had expected Gaetano.

But Donna Micaela was soon so busy with other things that there was no time for dreams. All day a mass of disgusting things poured in upon her.

The first was a letter from the old Etna robber, Falco Falcone.

"DEAR FRIEND DONNA MICAELA:

"Having heard that you intend to build a railroad on Etna, I wish to say that with my consent it shall never be done. I tell you this now, that you may not waste more money and pains on that matter.

"Enlightened and honorable Signora, I remain
Your humble servant,
"FALCO FALCONE."

"Passafiore, a nephew, has written the letter."

Donna Micaela tossed the soiled letter aside. It seemed to her as if that was a death-warrant for the railroad. To-day, however, she would not think of it. Now she had her bazar.

Immediately after that her road-builders Giovanni and Carmelo came. They wished to advise her to procure an engineer. Presumably she did not know the nature of the ground on Etna. First it was lava, then ashes and then lava again. Should the road be laid on the uppermost layer of lava, or on the ash-bed, or should they dig down still deeper? About how solid a foundation was necessary for a railroad? They could accomplish nothing without a man who understood this.

Donna Micaela dismissed them. To-morrow, to-morrow, she had no time to think of that to-day.

Then Donna Elisa came with still worse news.

There was a quarter in Diamante where only poor and wild people lived.

These wretches had become frightened on hearing about the railroad. There will be an eruption and earthquake, they had said. The great Etna will submit to no fetter. It will shake off the whole railroad. And the people now said that they ought to go out and tear up the road as soon as a rail was laid on it.

An evil day, an evil day! It seemed to Donna Micaela that she was farther from the goal than ever.

"Of what avail is it now to collect money at our bazar!" she said despairingly.

Nor did it seem as if she were going to earn any money from her bazar. In the afternoon it commenced raining. It had not rained in Diamante since the day the bells rang. The clouds laid themselves close to the housetops, and the water poured out of them. One was drenched, after being two minutes on the street.

At about six, when Donna Micaela's bazar was opened, it rained hardest. When she arrived at the monastery there were none there except those who were to help serve and sell.

She was on the point of crying. A day of evil! Whence came all these reverses?

Donna Micaela's eyes fell upon a stranger, who stood leaning against a pillar, regarding her. She recognized him at once. It was the jettatore from Catania,whom she had been taught to fear as a child.

Donna Micaela walked briskly up to him. "Come with me, signor," she said, walking before him. She wished to withdraw to a distance so that no one should hear them, and then she wished to beg him never more to come before her eyes.

She could not act differently. He must not ruin her whole life.

She did not think in what direction she was going. Suddenly she found herself at the door of the monastery church and entered there.

In there it was almost dark. A small lamp burning beside the image of Christ spread a faint light.

When Donna Micaela saw the image, she was startled. Just then she did not wish to see him.

He reminded her of how his crown had rolled to Gaetano's feet, when the latter had become angry with the brigands. Perhaps the Christ-image did not wish that she should drive away the jettatore.

Still she had real cause to fear the jettatore. And it was wrong of him to come to her feast. She must manage to get rid of him.

Donna Micaela had passed through the whole church and now stood gazing at the image of Christ. She could not say a word to the man who followed her.

She remembered how much compassion she had felt for him only a minute ago because he had been a prisoner, like Gaetano. She had felt so glad that she had been able to persuade him to come out into the world. What did she want to do now? Did she wish to send him back to prison?

She remembered both her father and Gaetano. Should this be the third one whom she. . . .

She stood silent, struggling with herself. At length the jettatore began speaking.

"Well, signorina, is it true, that you now have had enough of me?"

Donna Micaela made a contradictory gesture.

"Do you not wish me to return to my cell?"

"I do not understand you, signor."

"Yes, yes, you understand. Something terrible has happened to you to-day. You have an entirely different look now from that you had this morning."

"I am very tired," said Donna Micaela evasively.

The man came close up to her as if to extort from her the truth. Question and answer followed each other in rapid succession.

"Don't you see that your feast is about to become

a failure?"—"I'll have to repeat it to-morrow."—"Have you not recognized me, then?"—"Yes, I have seen you before in Catania."—"And you are not afraid of the jettatore?"—"I used to be, as a child."—"But now, now you are not afraid?"—She avoided answering him.—"Are you yourself afraid?" she said.—"Speak the truth!" he said impatiently. "What was it you wanted to say to me, when you conducted me hither?"

She gazed anxiously around. She must say something, she must make some reply. At that moment there arose in her mind a thought that appeared to her wholly preposterous. She looked at the image of Christ. "Do you demand this?" she seemed to ask him. "Shall I do it for this stranger? Ah, but it is throwing away my only hope."

"I hardly know if I dare to tell what I wanted with you," she said.—"I knew it, you do not dare."—"I intend to build a railroad. Do you know that?"—"Yes, I know."—"I wanted you to help me."—"Should I?"

Now that she had made a beginning, it was easier for her to proceed. She was astonished to find how natural it sounded when she spoke.

"I know that you are a railroad constructor. You probably understand that, for service on my railroad, no salary is given. Still it would be better that you helped me work than to sit confined here. You are only wasting your time."

He looked at her almost sternly. "Do you know what you are saying?"—"It is, I dare say, a presumptuous request."—"Yes, even so, a presumptuous request."

Thereupon the wretched man began to frighten her.

"It would go with your railroad as with your bazar." Donna Micaela thought so, too, and as she saw no way of getting out of it, she felt she must hold out by being kind.—"My bazar will soon be in full operation," she said.

"Listen, Donna Micaela," said the man. "The last thing a person ceases to think well of is himself, to put good faith in, is himself. One cannot cease to have hope regarding oneself."

"No, why should one?"

He made a motion, as though he were impatient at her assurance.

"When I first began to think over the matter," he said, "I consoled myself easily. 'It has been a couple of unfortunate incidents,' I said to myself. 'Rumors have got abroad concerning you, and thus it has become a belief. It is the belief that bewitches. One has met you, and one has believed that one should fail, and one has failed. It is a misfortune worse than death to be considered a jettatore, but you need not yourself believe in it.'"

"It is so unreasonable," said Donna Micaela.

"Of course, whence should my eyes have obtained power to bring misfortune? Accordingly, I decided to make an attempt. I journeyed to a place where no one knew me. The following day I read in the paper that the train in which I had traveled had run over a line-man. When I had been one day at the hotel, I saw the host in despair and all the guests departing. 'What has happened?' I asked. 'One of our servants has been smitten by the small-pox.' Ah, what misery!

"Well, Donna Micaela, I shut myself in and withdrew from all contact with the world. When a year had passed, I had become calm. I asked myself why I lived so secluded. 'Surely you are a harmless man,' I said; 'you would do injury to no one. Why do you live as wretchedly as a misdoer?' I had just decided to enter into life again, when I chanced to meet Fra Felice in one of the passages. 'Fra Felice, where is the cat?'—'The cat, signor?'—'Yes, the cloister cat, that used to come and get milk with me. Where is he now?'—'He was caught in a rat-trap.'—'In a rat-trap, Fra Felice?'—'He got his paw into a wire trap, and could not extricate himself. He dragged himself to one of the garrets, and died there of hunger.' What do you say to that, Donna Micaela?"

"Should you be to blame because the cat died?"

"I am a jettatore."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, how absurd!"

"As the time passed, there woke again within me a desire to live. Then Gandolfo knocked at my door and invited me to your feast. Why should I not go? It is impossible to believe of oneself that one brings misfortune simply by appearing. Only to get ready, Donna Micaela, was a feast, to take out one's black clothes, to brush them and put them on. But as I came down to the place of festivity, it was desolate, the rain poured in torrents, your Venetian lanterns were filled with water. And you yourself looked as though you had encountered all life's misfortunes in a single day. When you saw me your face became ashy from terror. I asked some one:

'What is Signora Alagona's maiden name?'—'Palmeri.'—'Ah, Palmeri! she is then from Catania. She has recognized the jettatore.'"

"Yes, that is true; I knew you."

"You have been very kind, very good, and I am sorry that I have spoiled your feast. But I promise you now that I shall keep away both from your feast and your railroad."

"Why should you keep away?"

"I am a jettatore."

"I do not believe it. I cannot believe it."

"I do not believe it, either. Yes, yes, I believe. It is said that no one can gain ascendancy over a jettatore, who is not as great in malice as he. Once, it is said, a jettatore looked at himself in a mirror, and immediately he fell down and died. Well, I never look at myself in a mirror. Consequently, I myself believe it."

"I do not believe it. I almost think I believed it when I saw you out there. Now I do not believe it."

"Perhaps you will let me work on your railroad?"

"Yes, yes; would you?"

Again he came close to her, and they exchanged a few short sentences.—"Step out into the light. I wish to see your face!"—"You think that I am dissembling."—"I believe you are polite."—"Why should I be polite towards you?"—"Of what significance is this railroad to you?"—"It signifies life and happiness to me."—"In what way?"—"It will benefit one who is dear to me."—"Very dear?"

She did not answer, but he read the answer in her face.

He then knelt before her, and bowed his head so low that he could kiss the hem of her skirt.—"You are kind, you are very kind. I will never forget this. O, were I not what I am, how I would serve you!"

"You *shall* serve me," she said. And his happiness so moved her that she no longer feared that he might harm her.

He started up. "I will tell you something. You cannot cross the floor, without stumbling, if I look at you."

"Oh!" she said.

"Try!"

And she tried. But she was quite timid. Ever since she had taken her first steps, she had never felt so insecure. But then she thought, "If it were for Gaetano's sake I could do it." And she did it.

She walked back and forth across the floor of the church. "Shall I do it once more?" He nodded.

While she walked, the thought occurred to her, that the Christ-child had taken the curse from him in order that he might aid her. She turned abruptly and came back to him.

"Do you know, do you know, you are no jettatore!"

"Am I not?'

"No, no," she took him by the shoulders and shook him. "Don't you see, don't you understand? It is taken away from you."

The voice of the little Gandolfo was heard in the passage outside the church. "Donna Micaela, Donna Micaela, where are you. We've got such a

lot of people, Donna Micaela. Do you hear, do you hear?"

"Has the rain ceased?" said the jettatore in an unsteady voice.

"It does not rain, how can it rain? The image of Christ has taken the curse away from you, in order that you may serve his railroad."

The man tottered and groped in the air with his hands. "It is gone. Yes, I believe it is gone. A moment ago it was there. But. . . ."

Again he wanted to fall on his knees to Donna Micaela.

"Not to me, to it, to it," she said, pointing to the image of Christ.

But he fell down before her nevertheless. He kissed her hands and between convulsive sobs he told her how people had persecuted and shunned him and how full of misery his life had been.

The following day the jettatore was at work staking out a road. And he was not more dangerous than any other person.

IX

PALAZZO GERACI AND PALAZZO CORVAJA

IT was at the time when the Normans reigned in Sicily, long before the Alagona race had come to the island, that the two magnificent palaces, Geraci and Corvaja were erected in Diamante.

The noble barons Geraci built their house by the market-place, on the crest of Monte Chiaro, whereas the barons Corvaja built their home far down the mountain, and embedded it in gardens.

Palazzo Geraci's black lava walls enclosed a small square courtyard all harmony and beauty. A high staircase, which passed underneath a triumphal arch garnished with weapons, led up into the second story. Not all around the courtyard, but here and there in the most unexpected places the walls opened to form a pillared loggia. Outside, the walls were ornamented with relief-fillets, with many colored slabs of Sicilian marble and with the Geraci barons' coat-of-arms. There were windows, too, very small, but whether they were round, with apertures so small that a grape leaf might cover them, or oblong, and so narrow that they did not admit more light than a slit in a curtain, they had magnificently wrought frames.

The barons Corvaja did not care to adorn the courtyard of their palace, but on the ground-floor a

magnificent hall was fitted up. A large cistern for gold-fishes was put in the floor, in the niches of the walls fountains covered with mosaic were erected, where clear water fell into seashells of gigantic size. Above this was a vault of Moorish structure supported by high pillars entwined by mosaic wreaths. It was a hall the like of which was only to be found in the Saracen palace at Palermo.

There was rivalry and contention during the whole period of building. When Palazzo Geraci added a balcony, Palazzo Corvaja added its high Gothic arched windows; when Palazzo Geraci's roof was adorned with richly carved merlons, Palazzo Corvaja added a frieze of black marble inlaid with white. Geraci's palace had a high tower, Corvaja's had a roof-terrace with ancient jars along the railing.

When at last the palaces were completed rivalry between the families who had built them began. Enmity and strife, it seemed, was communicated by the houses to all who lived in them. A baron Geraci could never be of the same opinion as a baron Corvaja. When Geraci fought for Anjou, Corvaja did battle for Manfred. If Geraci changed sides and supported Aragon, Corvaja departed for Naples and fought for Robert and Johanna.

But this was not enough. If Geraci gained a son-in-law, Corvaja felt he must add to his power by an advantageous marriage. The two families never found peace. The Geracis left home for the Bourbon court at Naples, not from a desire to gain distinction, but because the Corvajas were there. The Corvajas, on the other hand, had felt obliged to cultivate wine and work the sulphur-mines, because

the Geracis were interested in farming and mining. When a Geraci had been left an inheritance, some old relative of the Corvajas felt compelled to die, that the honor of the race might not be hazarded.

Palazzo Geraci was constantly busy counting its servants in order not to be surpassed by Palazzo Corvaja. But this was not enough; they must also keep track of the galloons on the caps too, and of the harness and horses. The pheasant feather at the neck of Corvaja's leading-horses must not be an inch higher than Geraci's. Their flocks of goats must increase in the same proportion, and Geraci's oxen must have just as long horns as Corvaja's.

In these days we would think that there ought to have been an end to the enmity between the two palaces. In these days the two palaces stand equally desolate.

Geraci's courtyard is now a filthy hole, containing both donkey stable and pig-sty and hen-yard. On the high staircase rags are dried and the relief-fillets are broken and scarred. In one of the two entrances vegetables are sold, and in the other shoes are made. The porter looks like the most wretched of beggars, and from cellar to garret may be found only poor miserable people.

Nor is Palazzo Corvaja one whit better. There is not a trace left of the mosaic covering in the great hall, only empty naked vaults. No beggars live there, because the greater part of the palace is in ruins. It lifts now only its beautiful front with the ornamented window-frames towards the bright Sicilian sky.

But the enmity between Geraci and Corvaja is not

ended. In olden times it was not only the noble families themselves who vied with each other, it was also their neighbors and dependents. All Diamante is constantly divided between Geraci and Corvaja. There is still a high crenelated wall running through the city, separating that part of Diamante which sides with Geraci, from that which has declared itself an adherent of Corvaja. To this day no one from Geraci will marry a girl from Corvaja. And a shepherd from Corvaja cannot let his sheep drink at Geraci's well. They have not the same saints even. San Pasquale is worshiped by Geraci and the black Madonna is Corvaja's patron-saint.

A man from Geraci can never believe anything else than that Corvaja is full of goblins, witches and ogres. A man from Corvaja would wager his soul's bliss that in Geraci is nothing but rogues and pick-pockets.

Donna Micaela lived in the Geraci district, and soon all that part of the city were adherents of her railroad. Accordingly Corvaja could not but oppose her.

The inhabitants of Corvaja were particularly displeased over two things. In the first place, they were jealous about the black Madonna's prestige, and therefore did not like that another miracle-working image had come to Diamante. In the second, they feared that Mongibello would bury all Diamante in fire and ashes if it was encircled with a railroad.

A few days after the fair, Palazzo Corvaja opened hostilities. Donna Micaela found one morning on the platform of the roof terrace a lemon so closely

beset with pins that it looked like a steel ball. It was Palazzo Corvaja that tried to spirit into her head as many pains as there were pins in the lemon.

Corvaja waited a few days to see what effect the lemon should make. But as Donna Micaela's people went on with their staking out, they came one night and pulled them up. And when the stakes were put up again the next day, they broke the windows in San Pasquale's, and threw stones at the image of Christ.

. . . . . .

There was a long and narrow little market-place on the south side of Monte Chiaro. On the two long sides stood tall, dark buildings. On one of the short sides was a steep chasm, on the other rose the precipitous mountain. The side of the mountain was arranged in terraces, but the steps were sunken and the marble balustrades broken. On the broadest terrace rose the stately ruin of Palazzo Corvaja.

The chief ornament of the market-place was a magnificent oblong basin for water, directly below the terraces and close to the mountain wall. It stood there, snow-white, adorned with reliefs and full of clear, cool water. That, of all Corvaja's grandeur, was best preserved.

One lovely and peaceful spring evening, two ladies, dressed in black, entered the little market-place. For a moment it was almost deserted. They looked about, and, seeing no one, sat down on the bench by the well, and waited.

Soon some curious children approached and surveyed them, and one of them, who was old, began speaking to the children. She proceeded to relate

stories to them. "It is told, and once upon a time," she said.

So the children were told about the Christ-child, which transformed itself to roses and lilies when the Madonna met one of Herod's soldiers, who had received command to murder all children. And they were told the legend about how the Christ-child once sat making birds out of clay, and how it clapped its hands and gave the clay cuckoo's wings to fly away with, when a bad boy wanted to break them.

While the elderly lady was talking, many children gathered around her, but grown-up people came too. It was Saturday night, so that the field laborers came home from their work in the fields. Most of them stopped at Corvaja's well to get a drink of water before going home. Hearing that legends were being told there, they tarried to listen. The two ladies were soon surrounded by a dark wall of coarse black mantles and slouched hats.

Suddenly the old lady said to the children: "Do you like the Christ-child?"—"Yes, yes," they said, and their large, dark eyes sparkled. "You would no doubt, like to see it?"—"Yes, we would."

The lady threw back her mantle and showed the children a little image of Christ in a swaddle beset with rings and with a gold crown on its head, and gold shoes on its feet. "Here it is," she said. "I have taken it with me to show you."

The children were enraptured. They first folded their hands before the image's earnest face, then they commenced to throw kisses at it.

"You think it beautiful, do you not?" said the old lady.

"Let us have it, let us have it!" cried the children.

Just then a laborer, large, dark complexioned with a black, bristly beard, pushed himself forward. He wanted to snatch away the image. The old lady barely had time to thrust it behind her back.

"Give it here, Donna Elisa, give it here!" said the man.

Poor Donna Elisa glanced at Donna Micaela, who had sat silent and displeased beside her. It was with difficulty Donna Micaela had been persuaded to go to Corvaja and show the image to the people there. "The image will aid us when it pleases," she said.

But Donna Elisa had persisted in going and had said that the image was only waiting to be carried to the unbelieving wretches in Corvaja. After all it had done, they surely might put so much confidence in it, that they believed that it would win these also.

But there stood Donna Elisa now, the fellow towering above her, and seeing no way to prevent him from snatching the image away from her.

"Give it to me with a good grace, Donna Elisa," said the man, "or, by God, I'll take it. I'll chop it into small pieces, into small, small pieces. You will see how much there will be left of your wooden doll. You will see, if it will be able to vie with the black Madonna."

Donna Elisa pressed herself up close to the side of the mountain; she saw no means of escape. She could not run, nor could she struggle. "Micaela," she moaned, "Micaela!"

Donna Micaela was very pale. She held her hands against her heart, as was her wont when anything excited her. It was terrible for her to stand as enemy against these swarthy looking men. It was these in the short mantles and slouched hats whom she had always feared.

Now, when Donna Elisa appealed to her, she turned quickly and, seizing the image, held it out towards the man.

"Take it!" she said defiantly. And she came forward a step to meet him. "Take it, and do what you can with it!"

She held the image on her outstretched arms, and came nearer and nearer to the dark laborer.

He turned towards his comrades. "She thinks I cannot harm that doll," he said and scoffed at her. And the whole cluster of working men struck their knees and laughed.

But he did not take the image, instead he grasped the large hoe which he held in his hand. He turned aside a few steps, lifted the hoe above his head and strained his whole body to give a blow which at once ought to shatter the abhorred wooden doll.

Donna Micaela shook her head warningly. "You cannot do it," she said, and she did not draw back the image.

He saw that she nevertheless was afraid, and he delighted in frightening her. He stood longer than was necessary with uplifted hoe.

At that moment there came a loud, distressing cry of "Piero" and again, "Piero, Piero!"

The man lowered the hoe without striking. He looked terrified.

"Piero," it came once more, shrill and piercing as a cry for help. "God, it is Marcia calling," he said.

Just then a crowd of people rushed pell-mell out of a little hut which was built inside the old Palazzo Corvaja's ruins. It was half a score of women and one carabineer at strife. The carabineer held a child on his arm, and the women tried to snatch the child away from him. But the policeman, who was a tall and strong man, broke loose from them, and placing the child on his shoulder he ran down the terrace steps.

Piero had looked on without making a movement. When the carabineer got away, he bent forward toward Donna Micaela and said earnestly: "If *the little one* can avert that, all Corvaja shall become his friend."

Now the carabineer had reached the market-place. Piero made a sign with his hand. Instantly all his comrades formed a ring around the fugitive. He glanced in all directions. Everywhere he saw a close ring of men, threatening him with their hoes and spades.

A frightful confusion ensued. The women, who had been struggling with the carabineer, came rushing down, shouting loudly. The girl whom he held in his arms screamed with all her might and tried to tear herself away. People poured in from all sides. All began to question and wonder.

"Let us now go," said Donna Elisa to Donna Micaela. "No one thinks of us now."

But Donna Micaela had caught sight of one of the women. She screamed least, but she saw immediately that the matter concerned her particularly. It was

evident that she was about to lose her life's happiness.

It was a woman who had been very beautiful, although all freshness was now gone, for she was no longer young. Still it was a grand and striking face. "Here dwells a soul that can love and suffer," said the face. Donna Micaela felt herself drawn toward this poor woman as toward a sister.

"No, it is not time to go yet," she said to Donna Elisa.

The carabineer asked and asked if they would allow him to pass.

No, no, no! Not before he gave back the child.

The child was Piero's and his wife Marcia's. But they were not her real parents. That was what the quarrel was about.

The carabineer endeavored to win the people over to his side by fair means. He tried to convince, not Piero or Marcia, but the others. "It is Ninetta who is mother to the child," he said, "you know that, do you not? She has not been able to have the child with her, while she has been unmarried, but now she is married and wants her child back. And now Marcia refuses to give her the boy. It is hard for Ninetta, who has not had her child with her for eight years. Marcia will not give it up. She turns Ninetta out when she comes begging for her child. Finally Ninetta felt obliged to complain to the syndic. And the syndic has told us to get the child for her. And besides is it not Ninetta's child?" he said appealingly.

But that had but little effect on Corvaja's men.

"Ninetta is a Geraci," burst out Piero, and the circle stood firm around the carabineer.

"When we came here to get the child," said the latter, "we did not find it. Marcia was dressed in black, and her room was dressed in black, and a whole lot of women sat mourning with her. And she showed us the child's certificate of death. Then we went and told Ninetta that her child was in the churchyard.

"Well, a little later I was on duty here in the market-place. I watched the children at play there. Who was strongest and who screamed the loudest, if not one of the girls? 'What is your name?' I asked her—'Francesco,' she answered immediately.

"The idea struck me, that this girl Francesco might be Ninetta's boy, and I stood still and waited. A minute ago I saw Francesco go into Marcia's house. I went there and by the table sat the girl Francesco eating her supper. Marcia and all the mourners began to scream when I came. I then seized Signorina Francesco and ran. 'For the child is not Marcia's. Understand that, signori! It is Ninetta's. Marcia has no right to it."

Then Marcia finally began to speak. She spoke in a deep voice, which compelled attention, and she made few, but noble gestures. Had she no right to the child? Who had fed and clothed it? It would have been dead a thousand times, had it not been for her. Ninetta had left it with La Felucca. They knew La Felucca. To leave one's child with her was the same as to say to it: "Thou shalt die." And besides right, right! What did that mean? The one whom the child loved had a right to him. The one who loved the child had a right to him. Piero and she loved the boy as their own son. They could not part with him.

There was despair over the wife, but still more over the husband. He threatened the carabineer should he stir. Yet the carabineer seemed to be aware that the victory would be his. They had laughed when he spoke about Signorina Francesco. "Hew me down, if you will," he said to Piero. "Will it help you? Will you be allowed to keep the child because of that? It is not yours. It is Ninetta's."

Piero turned towards Donna Micaela. "Ask him to help me?" He pointed to the image.

Donna Micaela then went immediately forward to Marcia. She was shy, and trembled at what she ventured to do, but it was not the time now to hold herself back. "Marcia," she whispered, "confess! confess, if you dare!" The woman looked at her aghast.—"I see it plainly," whispered Donna Micaela. "You are like each other as two cherries on the same stalk. But I'll say nothing if you so wish. "He will kill me," said Marcia. "I know one who will not let him kill you," said Donna Micaela. Otherwise they will take the child away from you," she added.

All were silent and fixed their eyes on the two women. One saw how Marcia struggled with herself. The features in her strong face twitched convulsively. So she moved her lips. "The child is mine," she said, but in a voice so low that no one heard it. She said it again, and now it came with a piercing cry. "The child is mine."

"What will you do with me now, when I confess it?" she said to her husband. "The child is mine, but not yours. It was born when you were working

in Messina. I placed it with La Felucca, and Ninetta's boy was there too. One day when I came to La Felucca she said: 'Ninetta's boy is dead.' First I thought only this: 'O God, if it had been mine!' So I said to La Felucca: 'Let my boy be dead, and let Ninetta's live.' I gave La Felucca my silver comb, and she agreed to it. When you came home from Messina, I said to you: 'Let us take a foster-child! It has never been well between us. Let us try to adopt a child!' You liked it, and I took my own child. And you have been fond of it, and we have lived as in paradise."

Even before she had ceased speaking the carabineer put down the child on the ground. The dark men silently opened their ranks for him, and he went his way. But a shiver as from ague passed through Donna Micaela as she saw the carabineer depart. He ought to have remained just then, in order to protect the poor woman. When he went, it was as if he had said: "She is outside the law, that woman. Her, I cannot protect!" Every man and woman who stood there felt the same. "She is outside the law."

One after another they went their way.

Piero stood motionless, looking up. Something wicked and awful was gathering within him. Ire and passion filled his soul. As soon as Marcia and he were left alone, something dreadful would burst forth.

The most terrible of all was that the woman did nothing to escape her doom. She stood still, paralyzed by the certainty that her fate was sealed, and that nothing could change it. She neither begged nor fled. She crouched together like a dog before an angry master. The Sicilian women know what

awaits them when they have wounded their husband's honor.

The only one who tried to defend her was Donna Micaela. She would never have begged Marcia to confess, she said to Piero, had she known how he was. She had believed that he was a noble man. A noble man would have said like this: You have acted wickedly but this your confessing your crime before all and exposing yourself to my anger for the sake of saving the child, atones for all. That is punishment enough. A noble man would have taken the child on one arm, laid the other around his wife and gone joyfully to his home. A signor would have acted so. But he was no signor, he was a blood-hound.

She might talk as much as she pleased, the man did not hear her, the woman did not hear her. It was as if her words had been thrown back by an impenetrable wall.

Just then the child came forward to the father and tried to take his hand. He looked at the boy enraged. Now that he was dressed in girl's clothes and had his hair combed smoothly back behind his ears, he saw the likeness between him and Marcia, which he had never noticed before. He kicked Marcia's son aside.

It was an awful moment. The neighbors continued to withdraw quietly and slowly. Many went unwillingly and hesitatingly, but they went nevertheless. The man seemed only to be waiting until the last one should go.

Donna Micaela ceased speaking; instead she took the image and laid it in Marcia's arms. "Take it, sister, and may it protect you," she said.

The man saw it, and it seemed to increase his wrath. It was as if he could no longer abide the moment when he should be alone. He drew his body together. He was like a beast of prey before the spring.

But the image rested not in vain in the woman's arms. The ejected image moved her to an act of the greatest love.

"What will Christ in paradise say to me, who has first deceived her husband and then made him a murderer?" she thought. And she remembered how she had loved this big Piero in youth's glad days. Little had she dreamed then that she should bring upon him such misery.

"No, Piero, no, do not kill me!" she cried quickly. "They'll send you to the galleys. But you shall be spared the sight of me."

She sprang to the opposite side of the market-place, where the steep precipice began. One understood very well what she intended to do. Her face bore witness for her.

Several hurried after her, but she had the start of them. At that moment the image, which she still carried, slipped out of her arms and laid itself at her feet. She stumbled over it and fell. Then she was overtaken.

She struggled to get loose, but a couple of men held her. "Ah, let me do it," she cried, "it is better for him."

But now her husband came up, too. He had caught up her child and placed it on his arm. He was deeply affected.

"There, Marcia, let it be, don't mind it," he said.

He was confused, but his dark eyes sparkled with joy and spoke more than words. "Perhaps, according to old custom, it ought to be so, but I do not care about it. There, come now! It would be a pity on such a woman as you, Marcia."

He laid his arms around Marcia's waist, and went towards his home up in Palazzo Corvaja's ruins. It was, as when one of the ancient barons marched in there. The people of Corvaja stood on both sides of his way and bowed to him and Marcia.

As they passed Donna Micaela, they both stopped, bent low before her and kissed the image, which had been returned to her. But Donna Micaela kissed Marcia. "Pray for me in your happiness, sister Marcia!" she said.

X

FALCO FALCONE

THE blind singers have sung about Diamante's railroad week after week, and the large collection-box in San Pasquale's has every night been full of gifts. Signor Alfredo surveys and stakes over on Etna's slope, and in the dark lanes the women at their distaffs tell of wonderful things which have been done by the little image of Christ in the despised church. From the rich and mighty who own land on Etna, come letter after letter, offering to open land for the blessed undertaking.

During these last weeks all come with gifts. Some give bricks for the stations, and some give powder to blast away lava blocks, and others give food for the laborers. But the poor people in Corvaja, who have nothing to give, come at night, when they have finished their work. They come with spades and wheelbarrows, and steal out on Etna, and dig the earth and lay the road. So that when Signor Alfredo and his people arrive in the morning, they verily believe that the Etna goblins have broken loose from their lava-streams and helped them work.

But all this time, it is asked and wondered: Where is the Etna king, Falco Falcone? Where is the mighty Falco, who has controlled the Etna slope for five and twenty years? He wrote to Don Ferrante's

widow that she should not be permitted to build this railroad. What did he mean by his threat? Why does he sit quiet, when they were defying his interdiction? Why does he not shoot down the people of Corvaja, when they come stealing along through the night with their wheelbarrows and picks? Why does he not drag the blind singers down into the quarry and beat them? Why does he not steal Donna Micaela out of the summer palace that he might demand a discontinuance of the railroad building as a ransom for her life?

Donna Micaela says to herself: "Has Falco Falcone forgotten his word, or is he waiting to strike till he may descend with the hardest vengeance?"

And everybody asks in the same manner: "When will Etna's cinder-cloud burst and bury the railroad? When will Mongibello's torrent dash it away? When is the mighty Falco Falcone ready to destroy it?"

While they are waiting for Falco to destroy the railroad, they talk about him a good deal, particularly among the working men, who are with Signor Alfredo.

Directly opposite the entrance to San Pasquale's church there stands, it is said, a little house on a bare cliff. The house is narrow, and so high that it resembles a chimney which is still standing after a burned-down house.

It is so small that there is no room for the stairs inside the house, so they wind along outside the walls. Here and there hang balconies and other projecting parts, arranged with no more symmetry than birds' nests on the trunk of a tree.

In this house Falco Falcone was born, and his parents were only poor working people. But it was in this poor home that Falco learned to be proud.

Falco's mother was an unhappy woman, who, during the first years of her marriage, only bore daughters into the world. Her husband and all her neighbors despised her.

This woman longed for a son. When she was expecting her fifth child, she strewed salt daily on her threshold, and sat spying who would be first to tread over it. Would a man come or a woman? Would she bear a son or a daughter?

Every day she sat counting. She counted the letters in the month when the child would be born. She counted the letters in her own name and her husband's. She added and subtracted. The result was even numbers. Consequently she should bear a son. The next day she counted over again. "Perhaps I counted wrong yesterday," she said.

When Falco was born, his mother was so honored that she loved him more on that account than all the rest of her children. When the father came in to see the child, he took off his cap and bowed low. Over the door of the house was placed a hat, as a mark of honor, and the child's bathing-water was poured out over the threshold and allowed to run down the street. When Falco was carried to the church, he was laid on his grandmother's right arm; when the women neighbors came to see his mother, they curtesied to the child, where it lay slumbering in its cradle.

It was also larger and stronger than children usually are. Falco had from the first coarse hair, and

when he was eight days old he had a tooth. But when his mother laid him to her breast, he was so violent that she laughed and said: "I believe I have given the world a hero."

She always expected great things of Falco, and she filled him with pride. But who else had hopes of him? Falco could not learn to read, even. His mother tried to take the book and teach him the letters. She pointed to A, this is the big hat; she pointed to B, this is a pair of spectacles; she pointed to C, this is the snake. That he learned. Then his mother said: "If you put the spectacles and the big hat together, you will have Ba." That he could not learn. He became angry and struck her. And she let him be. "You'll be a great man, nevertheless," she would say.

Falco was indolent and bad during his childhood and youth. As a child he would not play, grown up he would not dance. He took to himself no sweetheart, yet he went gladly to places where quarreling might be expected.

Falco had two brothers, who were like other people, and who were considered of greater importance than he. Falco, to be sure, felt hurt to find himself overlooked on account of his brothers, but he was too proud to show it, and his mother always took his part. After his father had died, she let him sit at the head of the table and she never allowed anyone to joke with him. "My eldest son is foremost of you all," she said.

As the people remember this, they say: "Falco is proud. He will esteem it an honor to destroy the railroad."

For thirty years, it is said, Falco lived in the same manner as other poor people on Etna. Monday he went to his work in the fields with his brothers. He had bread in his bag for the whole week, and he boiled rice and beans for soup like all the rest. And he was glad when on Saturday night he was allowed to return home. He was glad to find the table set with wine and maccaroni, and the bed made with soft pillows.

It was just such a Saturday night. Falco and his brothers were returning home, and Falco, as usual, was a little behind the others, for he had a heavy and slow gait. But when the brothers came home no supper stood waiting on the table, the bed was not made, and the dust lay thick on the threshold. What, were all in the home dead? Then they saw their mother sitting on the floor in a dark corner of the room. She had pulled her hair down over her face and sat writing with her finger on the earthen floor. "What is the matter?" said the brothers. She did not look up, she spoke as though she were speaking to the ground. "We are impoverished, impoverished." "Do they want to take the house away from us?" cried the brothers.—"They want to take honor and bread."

So she related to them: "Your eldest sister has been in service at baker Gasparo's, and it has been a good service. Signor Gasparo gave Pepa all the bread left over in the shop, and she gave it to me. It has been so much that it has been sufficient for us all. I have been glad ever since Pepa procured that service. My old age will now be free from care, I thought. But last Monday Pepa came home

to me and wept. Signora Gasparo had sent her away."

"What had Pepa done?" asked Nino, who was next to Falco in age.

"Signora Gasparo accused Pepa of stealing bread. I went to Signora Gasparo and begged her to take back Pepa.—'No,' she said, 'the girl is not honest.' —'Pepa got the bread from Signor Gasparo,' I said. 'Just ask him.'—'I cannot ask him,' said the signora, 'he is away and comes home next month.'—'Signora,' I said, 'we are so poor. Take back Pepa.'—'No,' she said, 'I myself will leave Signor Gasparo if he takes that girl back.'—'Beware,' I then said, 'if you take the bread from me, I'll take the life from you.' Then she became frightened and called for help, so that I was obliged to go."

"What is to be done?" said Nino. "Pepa must get another situation."

"Nino," said Mother Zia. "You do not know what that woman has said to the neighbors about Pepa and Signor Gasparo."

"Who can prevent women from talking?" said Nino.

"If Pepa now has nothing else to do, she might at least make us some food," said Turiddo.

"Signora Gasparo has said that her husband let Pepa steal bread in order that she should.——"

"Mother," interrupted Nino fiery red. "I do not intend to be put on the galleys for Pepa's sake."

"The galleys do not devour Christians," said Mother Zia.

"Nino," said Pietro, "we must go to the city and get some food."

As they said that, they heard someone laugh behind them. It was Falco that laughed.

A few minutes after that, Falco entered Signora Gasparo's shop and asked to buy a loaf. The poor woman felt frightened when Pepa's brother came into the shop. But then it occurred to her: He has just come from his work. He has not yet been home. He knows nothing.

"Beppo," she said to him, for Falco was not called Falco then, "is the vintage good?" And she was prepared not to get any answer.

But Beppo was more loquacious than usual, and told her straightway how many grapes they had already taken through the press. "Do you know," he said further, "that yesterday our land-tenant was murdered."—"Ah yes, the poor Signor Riego. I heard it." And she asked how it had happened.

"It was Salvatore, that did it. But it is too ghastly for a signora to listen to?"—"O no, what is done, may also become known."

"Salvatore went up to him like this, signora." And Falco now drew his knife and laid his hand on the woman's head. "Then he cut him across the throat from ear to ear."

But at the same time Falco said that, he did it. The woman had not even had time to scream. It was as if an expert had done it.

After that Falco was sent to the galleys, and he was there five years.

And when this is told, terror increases.

Falco is fearless. Nothing in the world can deter him from abandoning a purpose.

And forthwith they remember still another story.

Falco was conveyed to the galleys in Augusta, and while there became acquainted with Biagio, who since then has followed him all through life. One day he and Biagio and a third prisoner were commanded to do some work in the fields. It was one of the overseers who wished to lay out a garden around his house. There they went quietly digging the earth, but their eyes began to wander and wander. They were outside the walls, they saw the plain and the mountains, they even saw far away toward Etna.

"It is time," whispered Falco to Biagio. "I'd rather die than return to prison," said Biagio. Thereupon they whispered to the third prisoner that he must aid them. He did not want to, because his imprisonment was soon ended. "Then we will kill you," they said. Whereupon he yielded.

But the guard stood over them with his loaded gun in hand. On account of the shackles Falco and Biagio jumped with their feet together over to the guard. They brandished their spades above his head, and before he had time to think of shooting he was thrown to the ground, bound and had a piece of sod in his mouth. Thereupon the prisoners broke their chains with the spade, so that they could walk, and so stole away across the plain and in amongst the mountains.

When night came, Falco and Biagio slipped away from the prisoner whom they had brought with them. He was old and weak, so that he would hinder their flight. The following day he was caught by the carabinieri and shot.

And one shudders, when one remembers this.

Falco is unmerciful, one says. One feels that he will not spare the railroad.

And story after story comes frightening the poor people who work for the railroad out on the slope of Etna.

They tell of all the sixteen murders Falco has committed. They tell of his assaults and depredations.

There is one story which frightens them more than all the others put together.

When Falco returned from the galleys, he lived in the woods and caves and in the large quarries near Diamante. He soon had a powerful band collected around him. He became a grand and famous hero robber.

After that his relatives were much more respected than hitherto. They were esteemed as are the great and mighty. They scarcely needed to work, for Falco loved his relatives, and was liberal towards them. But he was by no means indulgent towards them, he was severe.

Mother Zia was dead, and Nino had married and lived in his father's cottage. Then it happened one day that Nino needed money, and he knew of no other means than to go to the rector, not to Don Matteo, but to old Don Giovanni: "Reverence," said Nino to him, "my brother begs of you five hundred lire."—"Where shall I get five hundred lire?" said Don Giovanni.—"My brother has need of them, has urgent need of them," said Nino.

Then old Don Giovanni promised to procure the money, if sufficient time was allowed him. Nino would hardly assent to that. You cannot ask that

I shall take five hundred lire out of my snuff-box," said Don Giovanni. And Nino granted him a respite of three days. "But beware of meeting my brother during this time," said he.

The next day Don Giovanni rode to Nicolosi to call in a debt. Who should he meet on the way, but Falco and two of his band. Don Giovanni threw himself from the mule down on his knees before Falco. "What does this mean, Don Giovanni?"—"I have not yet any money for you, Falco, but I will try to get it. Have compassion on me!"

Falco inquired, and Don Giovanni related. "Reverence," said Falco, "they have wished to deceive you." He bade Don Giovanni accompany him to Diamante. When they arrived at the old house, Don Giovanni rode in behind San Pasquale's wall and Falco called out Nino. Nino came out on one of the balconies. "Eh, Nino!" said Falco, laughing. "You have got money out of the rector?"—"Do you know that already?" said Nino. "I was just intending to tell you about it." Falco now grew more severe. "Nino," he said, "the rector is my friend, and he now believes that I wished to rob him. You have acted very wrong." In an instant his rifle was at his eye and he shot down Nino. And when he had done this he turned to Don Giovanni, who almost fell off the mule from terror. "You see, Reverence, that I had no part in the plot against you!"

And that happened twenty years ago, when Falco had not been a robber more than five years.

"Would Falco spare the railroad," they ask, "when he did not spare his own brother?"

One recalls yet another thing. The murder of

Nino drew down a vendetta over Falco. Nino's wife was so terror-stricken, when she found her husband dead, that one side of her body became paralyzed so that she was unable to walk. But at the window in the old cabin she took her place.

There she has sat for twenty years with the rifle beside her waiting for Falco. And her, the great robber, has feared. For twenty years he has not gone by his parental home.

That woman has not failed her post. No one ever approached San Pasquale's church without seeing her revengeful eyes glaring behind the window-pane. Who saw her sleep, who saw her work? She could do nothing but lie in wait for her husband's murderer.

When one hears this, one becomes still more frightened. Falco has good luck, one thinks. The woman who wants to kill him cannot move from her place. Falco is lucky. He will also succeed in destroying the railroad.

Fortune has never failed Falco. The carabinieri have pursued him, but have never been able to catch him. The carabinieri have feared Falco more than Falco has feared the carabinieri.

A story is told of a young carabineer who pursued Falco. He had arranged a hue-and-cry and hunted Falco from copse to copse. Finally the officer felt certain that he had Falco hemmed in in a brushwood. All around the wood stood guards, and the officer set off in there, and went back and forth with the rifle in his hand. But however much he searched, he saw no Falco. He came out again and met a peasant. "Have you seen Falco?"— "Yes, signor, he just passed by me, and he bade me greet you . . ."

— "Diavolo!' "He saw you in the brushwood and he was very near shooting you, but he did not do it, because he thought that perhaps it was your duty to pursue him."— "Diavolo, Diavolo!"— "But if you try once more after this . . ."— "Diavolo, Diavolo, Diavolo!"

"Do you suppose that lieutenant ever came back? Don't you suppose that he at once removed to a neighborhood where he did not need to pursue robbers?"

And the working-men out on Etna ask themselves: "Who will aid us against Falco? He is formidable. Even the soldiers tremble before him."

But Falco Falcone is now an old man. He no longer plunders the mail-coach, he does not kidnap estate-owners. He sits for the most part, quietly, in the quarry in Diamante, and, instead of stealing money and goods, he receives money and goods into his charge. All this they muse over. He receives a fee from the large estate-owners, that he shall protect their possessions against other robbers, and it has become quiet and peaceful on Etna, for he allows no one to harm those who pay him tribute.

But that quiets no one. Now that Falco has become a friend of the great, he may so much the easier destroy the railroad.

And they recall the story of Niccola Galli, who is the overseer on the Marquis di San Stefano's estate, on the south side of Etna. One time his laborers "struck" in the midst of the harvest-time. Niccola Galli was in despair. The wheat stood ripe, and he could not get it harvested. His laborers would not. His laborers laid themselves down to sleep on the edge of the ditch.

Niccola mounted a mule and departed for Catania to ask advice of his lord. On the way he met two men with rifles across their shoulders. "Whither away, Niccola?"

Before Niccola had time to say many words they had taken his donkey by the bridle and turned her. "You shall not go to the marquis, Niccola."—"Shall I not?"—"No, you shall ride home."

And off they went along the road. Niccola sat trembling on his donkey. On arriving at the farm, the men said: "Now show us the field!" And they went out to the laborers.—"Work, you rascals! The marquis has payed his fee to Falco Falcone. You may strike in other places, but not here." That field was harvested like no other. Falco stood on one side of the field and Biagio on the other. With such farm-bailiffs the harvesting was soon done.

When one remembers this one's fears increase. "Falco keeps his word," one says. "He will do what he has threatened to do."

No one has been robber chief so long as Falco. All the famous champions have perished or have been imprisoned. He alone clings with marvelous luck and skill to life and his profession.

By degrees he has collected around him his whole family. His brothers-in-law and nephews are all with him. Most of them have been sent to the galleys. None of them ever minds if he suffers in prison. He only asks if Falco is satisfied with him.

In the newspapers one often reads about Falco's achievements. One knows that the Englishmen

smuggle a ten-lire-bill into the hand of the guide, if he leads them to Falco's quarry. One knows that the carabinieri shoot at him no more, because he is the last great robber.

He fears so little to be captured that he often wanders to Messina and Palermo. He has even crossed the Sound and been in Italy. He went to Naples when Guglielmo and Umberto were there to christen the iron-clad. He traveled to Rome when Umberto and Margherita celebrated their silver wedding.

One thinks of this and trembles. Falco is beloved and admired, the workingmen say. One worships Falco. He has freedom to do what he pleases.

They also know that when Falco beheld Queen Margherita's silver wedding, it so pleased him that he said: "When I have lived on Etna five and twenty years, I will celebrate my silver wedding with Mongibello."

People have laughed at this, and said that it was an excellent idea. For he had never had a beloved, but Mongibello with its caves and forests and craters and ice-fields had served him and protected him as a wife. To no one in the world did Falco owe such a debt of gratitude as to Mongibello.

One asks when Falco and Mongibello are going to celebrate their silver wedding. And one answers that it would take place this spring. Then the laborers think: "*He will destroy our railroad on Mongibello's day.*"

Hesitation and fear prevail among them. Soon they dare work no further. As the time draws nigh, when Falco is to celebrate his alliance with Mongi-

bello, Signor Alfredo loses more and more laborers. Soon he is almost alone at his work.

. . . . . .

There are not many people who have seen the great quarry out on Etna. They have learned to shun it, because Falco Falcone lives there. They have kept away beyond range of his rifle.

They have not seen the great chasm in Mongibello's side out of which their forefathers, the Greeks, took stone in times long gone by. They have not seen the brilliantly shaded walls and the huge rocks which resemble pillars ready to fall. And perhaps they do not know that at the bottom of the quarry stand flowers more magnificent than in a conservatory.

It is no longer Sicily, it is India.

In the quarry stand mandarin-trees, so golden with fruit that one believes them to be immense sunflowers, and there the camellias become as large as tambourines. And on the ground between the trees lie masses of costly king figs and hairy peaches embedded on fallen rose-leaves.

One evening Falco sits alone in the quarry. Falco is at work making a wreath, and before him lies a mass of flowers. String he has as thick as rope ; he keeps his foot on the ball that it may not roll away from him. He wears spectacles, but they glide continually too far down on the bent nose.

Falco swears badly, for his hands are stiff with callosities, which have grown from constantly handling his rifle, and he cannot manage flowers very easily. The fingers grip them as hard as iron tongs. Falco

swears over the lilies, and the anemones fall to pieces if only he looks at them.

Falco sits there in his leather breeches and the long, buttoned coat, immured in flowers as a saint on a feast-day. Biagio and Passafiore, his nephew, have gathered them for him. They have piled up before him an Etna of the finest specimens that grow in the quarry. Falco can choose between lilies, cactus-blossoms and roses and geraniums. And he thunders at the flowers that he will trample them to dust under his leather sandals if they submit not to his will.

Never before has Falco had anything to do with flowers. As long as he has lived, he has never made a bouquet for a girl, or plucked a rose to place in his buttonhole. He has not even laid a wreath on his mother's grave.

Therefore the delicate flowers are rebellious towards him. Creepers entangle themselves in his hair and hat, and petals have fastened in his bristly beard. He shakes his head violently, and the scar on his cheek glows fiery red, as it used to do in former days when he fought with the carabinieri.

Nevertheless the wreath grows, and thick as a tree trunk it twines about Falco's feet and limbs. Falco swears over it as though it were the iron-fetter, which once dragged between his ankles. He complains more when he scratches himself on a thorn or stings himself on a nettle than he did when the galley-warder's lash cut his back.

Biagio and Passafiore, his nephew, dare not show themselves, but lie hidden in a cave until all is ready. They are in fits of laughter, because such lamenta-

tions as Falco's have not echoed in the quarry since wretched prisoners of war languished there at their work.

But Biagio gazes up towards the mighty Etna, blushing in the sunset. "Look at Mongibello," he says to Passafiore, "see how it blushes. It must suspect what Falco is doing down in the quarry."

And Passafiore answers: "Surely Mongibello has never dreamed that it should have anything on its crown but ashes and snow."

But all at once Biagio ceased laughing. "This is not well, Passafiore," he said. "Falco has become proud. I fear that the great Mongibello is making a fool of him."

The two bandits gaze searchingly into each other's eyes. "It is well, if it is only pride," says Passafiore.

Now they both look away at the same time, and dare not say anything more. The same thought, the same terror has seized them both. Falco was on the high road to insanity. Already he is at times insane. That is the way with the great hero robbers. They cannot bear honor and greatness, they all become mad.

Passafiore and Biagio have seen it long, but each one has kept it to himself, and each one has hoped that the other has not noticed it. Now they understand that both know it. They press each other's hands without a word. There is still so much that is grand in Falco. They two, Passafiore and Biagio, will watch over him, that no one shall notice that he is no more what he has been.

At length Falco's wreath is finished, he hangs it

on his gun-barrel, and approaches the others. Then all three ascend out of the quarry, and at the nearest farm they take horses, in order that they may quickly reach the top of Mongibello.

They ride at a sweeping pace, so that they have not opportunity to talk, but as they pass the farms they can see how the people are dancing on the flat roofs. And from the sheds, where the farm hands encamp for the night, they hear talking and laughter. There sit happy and peaceful people guessing riddles and jesting. But Falco rushes by. Such is not for him. Falco is a great man.

They dash upwards towards the heights. First, they ride between the almond trees and cactus, then under plantain trees and stone-pines, and so under oaks and chestnuts.

But the night is dark; they see nothing of Mongibello's grandeur. They see not the vine entwined Monte Rosso; they see not the three hundred crater-mouths which stand in a circle round about Etna's top like towers round a city; they see not the infinite charms of the woodlands.

At Casa del Bosco, where the road terminates, they dismount. Biagio and Passafiore take the wreath and carry it between them. But as they proceed, Falco begins to talk. Since he has become old, he likes to talk.

And Falco says that the mountain is like the twenty-five years of his life which he has lived there. Around the foundation years of his greatness grand deeds had flourished. To journey with him then, had been like moving beneath an endless pergola, where lemons and grapes hung over their heads.

Then his feats had grown profusely as the orange trees surrounding Etna's foot. As he had come higher, his feats had become more scarce, but those he had accomplished had been mighty as the oaks and chestnuts on the rising mountain. Now that he was at the height of greatness, he disdained to act. His life was as bald as the mountain-top. He was content to see the world at his feet. But then, one ought to understand that if he now undertook something, nothing could withstand him. He was formidable as the fire-spitting height.

Falco goes before and talks; Passafiore and Biagio follow him in silent consternation. Dimly they see Mongibello's mighty slope, with cities and fields and forests spread out before them. And Falco considers himself to be just as great as all!

As they struggle upwards, increasing ghastliness enwraps them. It is the ground's yawning rents; it is the sulphur-smoke from the crater, which billows down the mountain, too heavy to rise directly in the air; it is the shaking in the mountain; it is the constant dull rumbling thunder; it is the slippery, rough, ice-field through which streams are gushing; it is the excessive cold, it is the biting wind, which makes the traveling so horrible. And Falco says that this is like him! How is it, then, in his soul? Prevails there a cold and a ghastliness that are comparable to Etna's?

They stumble over pieces of ice, and they work their way through snow that at times lies two feet deep. The mountain wind almost knocks them down. They must wade through slush and water, for on the previous day the sun has melted a large

quantity of snow. And while they grow stiff with cold, the eternal fire beneath them shakes the mountain.

They remember that Lucifero and all the condemned are down there. They shudder to think that Falco has brought them to the gate of hell.

They make their way, however, across the ice field and reach the steep ash-cone itself, on the very top of the mountain. Here they struggle upwards, through gliding ashes and pumice-stone. When they are half-way up the cone, Falco takes the wreath and beckons to the others to wait. He alone shall ascend the height.

It grows light all at once, and as Falco reaches the top the sun appears. Mongibello, and even the old Etna-robber, stand enveloped in the most glorious morning light. But Etna's shadow is thrown over the whole of Sicily, and it seems as if Falco, who stands up there, reached from sea to sea, right across the island.

Falco stands there and looks about him. He looks over towards Italy; he fancies he sees Naples and Rome. He lets his eyes roam over the seas, toward the land of the Turks in the east and the Saracen country in the south. He feels as if all this lay at his feet and acknowledged *his* greatness.

Then Falco lays the wreath down on Mongibello's top.

When he comes down to his companions he presses their hands earnestly. In descending the cone, they notice that he picks up a pumice-stone and puts it in his pocket. Falco takes away with him a remembrance of the sweetest moment of his

life. So great he has never felt before as there on the summit of Mongibello.

But on this day of rejoicing, Falco does not wish to work. "To-morrow," he says, "I will go to work and deliver Mongibello from the railroad."

. . . . . .

On the road between Paternò and Adernò lies a lonely farmhouse. It is quite large, and it is owned by a widow, Donna Silvia, who has many and strong sons. It is a brave people that dare to live the year round alone out in the country.

It is the day after the one on which Falco had adorned Mongibello. Donna Silvia sits in the yard at her distaff. She is alone, there is no one at home on the farm but her. Just then a beggar steals in quietly through the gate.

He is an old man with a long, bent nose, which hangs down over his upper lip, bushy beard, dull red-edged eyes. One cannot see uglier eyes, the white in them is yellow, and they squint. The beggar is tall and very thin; when he walks he moves his body in such a way that it seems as though he wriggled along. He walks so quietly that Donna Silvia does not hear him. She first becomes aware of his shadow which, slender as a snake, comes meandering along towards her.

She looks up when she notices the shadow. Then the beggar bows and asks for a course of maccaroni.

"I have maccaroni over the fire," says Donna Silvia. "Sit down and wait and you shall have your fill."

The beggar sits down beside Donna Silvia, and

after a while they begin to talk. Before long they are talking about Falco.

"Is it true that you allow your sons to work on Donna Micaela's railroad?" says the beggar.

Donna Silvia bites her teeth together and nods affirmatively.

"You are a brave woman, Donna Silvia. Falco might take revenge on you."

"Let him take revenge then," says Donna Silvia. "I will not mind him, who has killed my father. He forced him to flee from the prison in Augusta, and my father was caught and shot."

When she has said this, she rises and goes into the house to fetch the food.

But as she stands in the kitchen, she sees the beggar, who sits rocking on the stone bench. He is not still for a moment. And before him wriggles his shadow, slender and mobile as a snake.

Donna Silvia now recalls what she once had heard Caterina, who had been married to Falco's brother, Nino, say. "How shall you know Falco now after twenty years?" some one had asked her. "Should I not know the man with the snake shadow?" she had answered. "That, he will not lose as long as he lives."

Donna Silvia's hand leaps to her heart. Out there in her yard sits Falco Falcone. He has come to take vengeance, because her sons work on the railroad. Will he set the house on fire, or will he murder her?

Donna Silvia trembles, as she serves up her maccaroni.

Falco, however, begins to find time long, where he sits on the stone bench. A little dog comes up to

him and rubs himself against him. Falco feels in his pocket after bread, but finds only a stone, which he throws to the dog.

The dog fetches the stone and forthwith comes back to Falco with it. Falco throws it once more. The dog takes the stone again, but now he runs away with it.

Falco remembers that it is the stone he picked up on Mongibello, and pursues the dog to get it back. He whistles to the dog, and it comes to him instantly. "Give me the stone!" The dog puts his head on one side and will not give it to him. "Ah, give me the stone, you rascal!" The dog closes his lips. Why, he has no stone. "Let's see, let's see!" says Falco. He bends the head backwards and compels him to open his mouth. The stone lies far in under the teeth-membrane, and Falco tries to poke it out. Then the dog bites him, so that blood flows.

Falco becomes frightened. He goes in to Donna Silvia. "I trust your dog is sound?" he says.

"My dog, I have no dog. It is dead."—"But the one running out there."—"I do not know which one you mean," she says.

Falco says no more, neither does he harm Donna Silvia. He only goes his way. He is afraid. He thinks that the dog is mad and that he himself will now have hydrophobia.

. . . . . .

One evening Donna Micaela sits alone in the music-room. She has extinguished the lamp and opened the balcony doors. She likes to listen to the street at evening and at night. Then blacksmiths,

stone-polishers and heralds are heard there no more. Then there is song, laughter, whispers and mandolins.

Suddenly she sees a dark hand laid on the balcony rail. The hand draws up after it an arm and a head. In a moment a whole body swings itself down on the balcony. She sees him quite well, for the street-lamps are still burning. It is a short, broad-shouldered, great-bearded fellow. He is dressed like a shepherd, he has leather-sandals, slouch-hat and umbrella, strapped to his back. The moment he is on his feet he snatches a gun from his shoulder and, holding it between his hands, enters the room.

She sits still without giving a sign of life. There is no time either to fly or to call for help. She hopes that the man will take what he wants and go away without noticing her, as she sits far down in the dark room. The man puts down his gun between his knees, and she hears him light a match. She closes her eyes. He may believe that she is asleep.

As the robber strikes the light, he sees her immediately. He coughs to awaken her. As she continues motionless he steals along quietly, and cautiously stretches out one finger towards her arm. "Do not touch me, do not touch me," she screams, and can no longer sit still. The man retreats instantly. "Dear Donna Micaela, I only wished to wake you."

She sits there trembling with fright, and he hears how she sobs.—"Dear signora, dear signora," he says. "Light the lamp that I may see where you are," she cries. He strikes fire to another match, lifts the shade and chimney off the lamp and lights

it as cleverly as a valet. Afterward he places himself by the door, as far from her as possible. All of a sudden, he goes out on the balcony with his gun. "Now surely the signora need not be afraid."

But as she does not cease crying he says: "Signora, I am Passafiore, the nephew, I come with a message to you from Falco. He no longer desires to destroy your railroad."

"Have you come to jest with me?" she says.

Then the man answers almost crying: "Would to God that this were jest! Would to God that Falco were the same as he has been!"

He relates how Falco had ascended Mongibello and adorned its top. But the mountain had not liked this, and now it had felled Falco. One single little pumice-stone from Mongibello had been sufficient to strike down the feared one.

"Now all is over with Falco," says Passafiore. He wanders down in the quarry expecting to be sick. For eight days he has neither slept nor eaten. He is not sick yet, but the wound in his hand does not heal. He believes that he has the poison in his blood. 'Soon I shall be a mad dog,' he says. There is no food nor wine that will tempt him. He derives no pleasure from my extolling his deeds.—'What is that to talk about,' he says. 'I shall end my life as a mad dog.'"

Donna Micaela looks sharply at Passafiore.—"What do you wish me to do about this? You surely do not mean that I shall go down into the quarry to Falco Falcone?"

Passafiore looks down and dares not answer.

She explains to him what Falco has made her suf-

fer. He has frightened away her laborers. He has thwarted her dearest wishes.

Suddenly Passafiore falls on his knees. He dare not approach one step nearer to her than he is, yet he falls on his knees.

He begs that she will see how much there is at stake. She does not know, she does not understand who Falco is. Falco is a great man. Ever since Passafiore was a little child, he has heard about him. All his life he has longed to go to the quarry and live with him. All his cousins went to him, the whole family lived with him. But the rector had made up his mind that Passafiore should not go. He made a tailor of him ; only think, a tailor ! He talked with him and told him not to go. It was such a dreadful sin to live like Falco. Passafiore had struggled against the temptation for many years for Don Matteo's sake. But, at last, he could no longer resist, he had gone to the quarry. And now he has not been permitted to live with Falco one year, before the latter is quite a wreck. It is as if the sun had become extinct in the heavens. His whole life has become desolate.

Passafiore looks over to Donna Micaela. He sees that she listens and understands him.

He reminds Donna Micaela that she has helped a jettatore, and an adulteress. Why should she be hard towards a robber? Did not the Christ-image in San Pasquale's give her everything she asked for? He was certain that she had asked the Christ-child to protect the railroad against Falco. And it had obeyed her; it had suffered Mongibello's pumice-stone to break Falco's strength. But now, would she not now be gracious and help them, so that Falco might get

back his health and become an honor to the country, as he had been before?

Passafiore succeeds in moving Donna Micaela. All at once it becomes clear to her the condition of the aged robber down in the dark caves of the quarry. She sees him wandering about expecting to become mad. She remembers how proud he has been, and how broken down and crushed he now is. No, no, no one ought to suffer so. It is too much, too much.

"Passafiore," she exclaims, "speak! What is it you wish? I will do whatever I can. I am no longer afraid. No, I am not at all afraid."

"Donna Micaela we have begged Falco to go to the Christ-image and ask for grace. But Falco will not believe in the image. He will do nothing but sit still and wait for his ruin. But to-day when I implored him to go and pray, he said: 'You know who sits waiting for me in the old house opposite the church. Go to her and ask her if she will give me liberty to go by her into the church. If she permits that I will believe in the image and make my prayer before it!"

"Well?" asked Donna Micaela.

"I have been to the aged Caterina, and she has given her permission. 'He shall be allowed to pass into the church of San Pasquale, without my striking him down,' she said."

Passafiore still remains on his knees.

"Has Falco then been in the church?" asked Donna Micaela.

Passafiore moves somewhat nearer. He wrings his hands in despair. "Donna Micaela, Falco is very ill. It is not only the effect of the dog bite, he was

ill before." And Passafiore struggles with himself before he can speak out. At length he admits that, although Falco is a very great man, he has at times attacks of insanity. And now he had not only spoken of the aged Caterina, but had said like this: "If Caterina will allow me to pass into the church, and if Donna Micaela Alagona comes down into the quarry and stretches out her hand and leads me to the church, then I will go to the image." And from this he will not swerve. Donna Micaela, who was the best and holiest among women, should come to him, else he would not go.

When Passafiore has finished, he holds his head continually bowed down. He dares not look up.

But Donna Micaela does not hesitate a moment after mention has been made of the Christ-image. She does not seem to consider that Falco is insane. She does not say a word about how afraid she is. Her trust in the image is such, that she answers gently as a vanquished and obedient child:

"Passafiore, I will accompany you."

Afterwards, she follows him as though she were walking in her sleep. She does not hesitate to ascend Etna with him. She does not hesitate to climb down the steep rocky wall of the quarry. She advances, quite pale, yet with beautiful beaming eyes to the aged robber in his cave, and holds out to him her hand. And he rises as ghastly pale as she, and follows her. It is as if they were not human beings but specters. They proceed toward their goal in perfect silence. Their own being is dead, but a mightier spirit leads and guides them.

The next day it all seems to Donna Micaela like a

fairy-tale. She is positive that her own compassion, or pity, or love could not have prevailed upon her to go down into the robber's den at night had not a strange power led her. She has been wholly beside herself.

While Donna Micaela is down in the robber's cave, old Caterina sits at her window and waits for Falco. She has yielded almost without entreaty.

"He shall be free to pass into the church," she says. "I have been expecting him for twenty years, yet he shall be free to pass into the church."

Soon Falco comes with Donna Micaela's hand in his Passafiore and Biagio follow him. Falco walks bent; it is seen that he is old and weak. He alone enters the church, the others remain outside.

The aged Caterina has seen him quite distinctly yet she has not moved. She sits silent all the time. Falco is in the church. Her niece, who lives with her, believes that she is praying and thanking God that she has been able to overcome her thirst for vengeance.

At length Caterina requests her to open the window. "I wish to see if he still has the snake shadow," she says. But she is kind and gentle.

"Take the gun, if you wish," she says. And the niece moves the gun over to the other side of the table.

At last Falco comes out of the church. The moonlight falls directly in his face, and Caterina sees that he is unlike the Falco she remembered. The old surliness and pride are no longer visible in his features. He comes bowed and broken. He almost fills her with pity.

"He will help me," he says out loud to Passafiore and Biagio. "The Christ-child has promised to help me."

The robbers wish to go, but Falco is so glad, that first of all he must talk with them about his happiness.

"I feel no buzzing in my head, no pain, no anxiety. He is helping me."

The comrades take him by the hand to lead him away. Falco walks a few steps then he stops again. He straightens himself up and at the same time moves his body so that the snake-shadow turns and twists on the road.

"Quite well, I shall be quite well," he says.

The men pull him along, but it is too late.

Caterina's eyes have fallen on the snake-shadow. She can no longer control herself. She throws herself across the table, takes the gun and fires it off. And she kills Falco. She probably had not intended to do it, but when she saw him, it was impossible for her to allow him to pass. For twenty years she had nourished the thought of revenge. That gained the power over her.

"Caterina, Caterina," cried her niece.

"He only begged me to be free to pass into the church," answered Caterina.

The aged Biagio lays Falco's remains to rights and says with a grim mien.

"Quite well, he would be quite well!"

XI

VICTORY

FAR back in the olden times there lived in Sicily the great philosopher Empedokles. He was the most beautiful and most perfect of men, so glorious and wise that one believed him to be a god.

Empedokles owned a country-place on Etna, and one evening he made a feast there for his friends. During the feast he spoke such words that they cried out to him, "Thou art a god: Empedokles, thou art a god!"

During the night, Empedokles thought: "Thou hast now attained unto the highest possible on earth. Now thou shouldst die, before adversity and weakness come upon thee." And he wandered up to Etna's top and threw himself down into the burning crater. "When no one finds my body," he thought, "they will say that I have been taken up alive among the gods."

The following morning however, his friends sought him all over the villa and over the whole mountain.

They also came up to the crater, and there at the mouth they found Empedokles' shoe. And they understood that Empedokles had sought death in the crater in order to be numbered among the immortals.

And he would have succeeded in that as well, had not the mountain thrown up his shoe.

Just on account of this story, Empedokles' name has never been forgotten, and many have wondered where his villa could have been situated. Archæologists and diggers for treasures have sought it because the villa of the illustrious one was naturally filled with marble statues, bronzes and mosaics.

Donna Micaela's father, Cavaliere Palmeri, had made up his mind that he should solve the problem about the villa. Every morning he mounted his pony Domenico, and rode off to seek it. He was equipped like a researcher, with scraper in the belt, spade at the side and a large knapsack on his back.

Every evening, when Cavaliere Palmeri came home, he related for Donna Micaela about Domenico. During these years, which they had ridden about on Etna, Domenico had developed into an archæologist. Domenico turned off from the road as soon as he espied a ruin. He stamped on the ground on those places where he considered researches should be made. He sniffed contemptuously and turned away his head if shown a counterfeit old coin.

Donna Micaela listened with great patience and interest. She was certain that in case that villa suffered itself to be found eventually, Domenico would have the honor of the discovery.

But Cavaliere Palmeri never asked his daughter about *her* enterprise. He never showed any interest in the railroad. It was almost as though he was ignorant of her being at work upon it.

That was not strange though, he never showed interest in anything which concerned his daughter.

One day, as they both were sitting at the dinner.

table, Donna Micaela began suddenly to speak of the railroad.

She had won a victory, she said. She had at last won a victory.

He must hear what news she had received to-day. It would not be a steam-tramway only between Catania and Diamante, as she had first imagined it would be a railroad all around the whole of Etna.

Through Falco's death, she had not only gotten rid of Falco himself, but now the people also believed that the great Mongibello and all the saints stood on her side. And so there had arisen among the people a movement to get the railroad started. Contributions were being made in all the Etna towns. A company was formed. A concession had come to-day. To-morrow work would begin in earnest.

Donna Micaela was excited. She could not eat. Her heart swelled with joy and gratefulness. She could not leave off speaking about the great enthusiasm which had seized the people. She spoke with tears in her eyes about the Christ-child in San Pasquale's.

It was affecting to see how her face beamed with hope. It was as if, in addition to that happiness she was speaking of, she had a whole world of bliss in anticipation.

That night she felt that Providence had ordered well and happily for her. She saw that Gaetano's imprisonment had been God's doing, in order to lead him back to faith. He should be released through the miracles of the little image, and that would convert him, so that he should become a believer as before. And she should be permitted to belong to him. How good God was!

And whilst this great bliss was surging through her, her father sat opposite her, perfectly stiff and indifferent.

"Why, that is quite remarkable," was all he said.

"I suppose you would like to be present to-morrow at the foundation feast?"

"I hardly know. I have my researches."

Donna Micaela began crumbling her bread to pieces somewhat impetuously. Her patience was at an end. He had been spared taking any share in her sorrows, but her joy! He must share her joy!

And all at once the bond of submissiveness and fear burst, which had bound her ever since his imprisonment.

"You, that travel so much on Etna," she said in a very gentle voice, "have, no doubt, visited Gela?"

The Cavaliere looked up and seemed to search in his memory. "Gela, Gela?"

"Gela is a village of about one hundred houses, lying on the south side of Monte Chiaro, close by its foot," continued Donna Micaela with a most innocent mien. "It lies wedged in between Simeto and the mountain wall, and an arm of the river most frequently takes its course through Gela's street, so that one very rarely is able to get through the village dry-shod. The roof of the church fell in at the last earthquake, and has not been repaired, because Gela is impoverished. Have you really not heard about Gela?"

Cavaliere Palmeri answered with indescribable earnestness: "My researches have taken me further

up the mountain. It has not occurred to me to seek the great philosopher's villa in Gela."

"But Gela is an interesting city," said Donna Micaela persistently. "They have no special outhouses there. The swine live on the ground floor, the people one story above. They have also an infinitude of swine in Gela. They thrive there better than the people, for the people are almost always sick. Fever prevails continually, the malaria does not leave it. It is so damp that the cellars are always under water, and the marsh-mists envelop it every night. In Gela there are no shops, neither police, mail, doctor, nor apothecary. Six hundred people live there, quite forgotten and barbarized.—You have never heard of Gela, then?"

She looked so honestly surprised. Cavaliere Palmeri shook his head. "The name, I presume, I have heard——"

Donna Micaela cast a penetrating glance at her father. Thereupon she bent quickly towards him, and drew out of his breast-pocket a small curved knife, such a knife as is used in pruning vines.

"Poor Empedokles," she said, and at the same time her whole face sparkled with roguishness. "One believes oneself ascended to the gods, but Etna always throws up one's shoe."

Cavaliere Palmeri collapsed as from a shot.

"Micaela," he said, with a faint attempt at warding off, like one who does not know how he shall defend himself.

But she was instantly just as serious and innocent as a minute ago. "I have been told," she said, "that a few years ago Gela was almost perishing.

All the people are vine-growers, and when the phylloxera came and destroyed their vineyards, they nearly perished of hunger. Agricultural societies sent them a species of American plants which are not affected by the phylloxera. The people of Gela put out these, but all the plants died. How should the Gela people know how to take care of American vines? Well, then some one came and taught them how."

"Micaela," it came almost like a moan. Donna Micaela thought that her father already looked like a vanquished man, but she continued, as though she had not noticed anything.

"*Some one came*," she said, with strong emphasis, "and he had sent for new plants. He began to set them out in their vineyards. They laughed at him, they said that he acted foolishly. But his plants thrived and lived; they did not die. And he has saved Gela."

"I do not think this story entertaining, Micaela," said Cavaliere Palmeri, attempting to stop her.

"It is just as entertaining as archæology," she said calmly. "But I will tell you something. One day I went into your room to obtain a book about archæology. I then found that your whole bookshelf was full of treatises on phylloxera, about grape-cultivation and wine-making."

The cavaliere writhed in his chair like a trampled worm. "Be quiet, be quiet," he said faintly. He was more embarrassed than when he was accused of stealing.

But now all the smothered roguishness flashed forth again in her eyes.

"I sometimes looked at the letters you sent off," she continued. "I wanted to see with what learned men you corresponded. It surprised me that the letters were always addressed to the presidents and secretaries of agricultural societies."

The cavaliere was unable to utter a word. Donna Micaela enjoyed more than any one can tell to see him so powerless.

She looked him steadily in the eyes. "I do not believe that Domenico has yet learned to know a ruin," she said emphatically. "The dirty youngsters in Gela, it is said, play daily with him, and feed him with water-cresses. Domenico, it seems, is a god in Gela, not to speak of his——"

Cavaliere Palmeri seemed to get an idea.

"Your railroad," he said, "what did you say about your railroad? Perhaps I can come to-morrow."

Donna Micaela did not listen to him. She took up her pocket-book.

"I have a counterfeit old coin," she said. "A Demarata of nickel. I bought it to show Domenico. He will sniff at it."

"Now listen, child."

She did not listen to these attempts at penance. Now the power was hers. Now it required more than that to reconcile her.

"Once I opened your knapsack to look at your archaic-treasures. All I found there was a piece of an old vine."

She sparkled with merriment and fun.

"Child, child!"

"What shall one call this? It certainly can't be

archæology. Is it perhaps charity, is it perhaps penance——"

Cavaliere Palmeri now struck his hand on the table, so that glasses and plates jumped. This became too painful. A stiff and solemn elderly gentleman could not stand such sport. "As surely as you are my daughter, you will be silent now."

"Your daughter," she said, and all fun was instantly gone, "am I really your daughter? The children in Gela are at least allowed to caress Domenico, but I——"

"What do you wish, Micaela, what do you desire?"

They looked at each other, and their eyes filled simultaneously with tears.

"I have no one but you," she murmured.

Cavaliere Palmeri opened his arms to her. She rose lingeringly, she could hardly believe her eyes.

"I know how it will be," he said grumblingly, "not a minute shall I have for myself."

"To discover the villa?"

"Come and kiss me, Micaela! To-night for the first time since we left Catania, you are fascinating."

When she threw her arms around him, it was with a hoarse, wild cry, which almost frightened him.

BOOK III

"And he shall gain many followers."

I

THE OASIS AND THE DESERT

IT was in the spring of 1894, that the Etna railroad was begun, in the autumn of 1895 it was finished. It rose from the sea-shore, encompassed the mountain in a wide semicircle and came back to the sea-shore.

The trains run every day, and Mongibello lies vanquished and suffers it to pass. Strangers journey amazed through the black, distorted lava-streams, through the white almond-groves, through the dark old Saracen-towns. "Lo, only think that such a country exists upon the earth!" they say.

In the coupés some one is always telling about the time when the Christ-image was in Diamante.

What a time, what a time! Every day the image worked new miracles. One cannot tell of them all, but he made it so bright in Diamante as if the moments of the day had been dancing maidens. One fancied that Time had filled the hour-glass with glit tering gold sand.

Had any one asked who it was that reigned in

Diamante at that time, the answer would have been that it was the Christ-image. Everything was done according to its will. No one took a wife, or played at the lottery, or built a house without consulting it.

Many a stab was not dealt for the sake of the image, and many an old feud became settled, and many a bitter word remained unspoken.

One must be good, because it was noticed that the image aided those that were peaceful and helpful. For them it procured good gifts of joy and prosperity.

Now if the world had been, as it should be, Diamante would soon have become a great and powerful city. But instead, that part of the world that did not believe in the image destroyed all its works. It availed not how many blessings it scattered about.

The taxes kept growing continually and taking away with it all wealth. And then there was the war in Africa. How could any one be happy, when their sons, money, and donkeys had to go to Africa? And the war there went badly, defeat upon defeat. How could any one be happy when the country's honor was at stake?

Above all it was after the railroad had been finished that it became noticed that Diamante was like an oasis in a great desert. The oasis is exposed to the flying sand of the desert, and robbers and wild animals. So also Diamante. The oasis ought to spread itself out over the whole desert in order to be secure. Diamante began to think that it could not be happy until the whole world worshiped its image of Christ.

Now it turned out that everything Diamante hoped for and aspired to was denied it.

Thus Donna Micaela and all Diamante longed to get back Gaetano. When the railroad was ready Donna Micaela departed for Rome, and begged for his release, but it was denied her. The king and the queen would gladly have helped her, but they could not. You know who was then minister. He ruled Italy with an iron hand. Do you suppose he allowed the king to pardon a rebellious Sicilian?

It was also heartily wished that Diamante's Christ-child should receive the worship which was due it, and therefore Donna Micaela sought audience with the aged man at the Vatican. "Holy Father," she said, "let me relate to you what has taken place in Diamante on the slope of Etna!" And after she had told about all the image's miracles, she begged that the pope would have the old church of San Pasquale cleansed and consecrated and a priesthood instituted there for the Christ-child's cult. But Donna Micaela was refused in the Vatican as in the Quirinal.

"Dear Princess Micaela," said the pope, "the church dares not consider these events of which you speak as miracles. Still you need in nowise despair. If the Christ-child wishes to be worshiped in your city, it will make still another sign. It will manifest to Us its will so plainly, that We need not hesitate. And forgive an old man, my daughter, because he must be cautious!"

A third thing was hoped for in Diamante, something, some word from Gaetano. Donna Micaela went to Como, where he was kept a prisoner. She had with her letters of recommendation from per-

sons of the highest authority in Rome, and she felt sure that she should be permitted to speak with him. But the prison-director sent her to the prison-doctor.

The latter forbade her to speak to Gaetano.

"You wish to see that prisoner," he said. "You cannot. You say that he loves you and thinks you dead. Let him think so! He is reconciled to die. He suffers no more from longing. Do you wish him to learn that you are living, so that he shall begin to long? You wish to kill him then? I will tell you something; should he begin to long for the world he will be dead within three months.

He spoke in such a manner that Donna Micaela understood that she must give up seeing Gaetano. But what a disappointment, what a disappointment!

When she came home, she felt as one who had dreamed so vividly that not even after he has waked is he able to come out of his dreams. She could not conceive that all her hopes had been defeated. She surprised herself again and again by thinking like this: "When I have rescued Gaetano." But now she had no hope of saving him.

She thought now of one enterprise, now of another, which she wished to start. Should she ditch around the plain, or should she mine marble on Etna? She hesitated and wondered. She could not adhere to anything.

The same listlessness, which had seized Donna Micaela, crept over the whole city. It became apparent that everything which was dependent on people who did not believe on Diamante's image of Christ, was badly managed and proved a failure.

Even the Etna railroad was managed improperly.

Accidents happened continually in the steep ascents. And the prices of tickets were too high. People began to have recourse to omnibus and cart again.

Donna Micaela and others commenced to think of taking the image of Christ out into the world. They would go out and show how it gave health and livelihood and gladness to all who would be gentle and industrious and help their neighbor. If the people were duly made to see this they surely would repent.

"That image should stand on Capitolium and rule the world," said the people in Diamante.

"All who rule us are worthless," said the people. "We would rather be governed by the holy Christ-child."

"The Christ-child is mighty and benevolent; if it reigned, the poor would be rich, and the rich have enough. If it bore sway, then they who now are ruled would sit in the council-chambers. It would pass through the world like a plow with a sharp edge, and that which now lies unproductive in the depths, would then yield harvests.

However before these plans were achieved there arrived, during the first days of March, 1896, news of the battle of Adna. The Italians had been beaten, and several thousands of them were dead or prisoners.

A few days later there was a change in the cabinet in Rome. And the man who now came into power, feared the Sicilians' wrath and despair. In order to pacify them he had a few of the imprisoned socialists released. The five whom it was thought the people most longed for were set free. They were Da Felice, Bosco, Verro, Barbato and Alagona.

Ah, Donna Micaela tried to be glad when she learned this. She tried not to weep.

She had believed that Gaetano was in prison in order that the Christ-image might break down his prison-walls. He was brought thither by God's grace, that he might be compelled to bow his head before the Christ-child and say: "My Lord and my God."

But now it was not the image that had delivered him. He would come out the same heathen as before. The same yawning cleft would always be between them.

She endeavored to be glad. Was it not enough that he was free? What signified his and her happiness in comparison with that!

But thus it happened with everything which Diamante had hoped and striven for.

The big desert was very cruel towards the poor oasis.

II

IN PALERMO

At last, at last, it is one o'clock in the night. They that are afraid of oversleeping leave their beds, dress and go out into the street.

And they that have been sitting at the café table until now rush up on hearing steps on the pavement. They shake off drowsiness and hurry out. They mingle in the fast growing throng and the sluggish hours begin to pass on a little faster. Slightly acquainted people press each other's hands fervently. And the most uncommon people are out, old university professors, and haughty nobles and grand ladies, who never set their foot on the street. They are all equally glad.

"O God, to think that he is coming, that Palermo will now get him back!" they say.

The Palermo students, who have not left their usual headquarters in Quattro Canti during the whole night, have provided themselves with torchlights and colored lanterns. They were not to be lit until about four o'clock, when the expected one should arrive, but towards two o'clock one after the other begins to try if his torch burns well. Then they light them all with shouts of vivat. It is impossible to remain in the dark when so much joy burns within one.

At the hotels the travelers are awakened and exhorted to rise. "There's a feast in Palermo to-night, O signori!"

The travelers ask for whom. "For one of the socialists, whom the government has set at liberty. He is coming this morning on the steamboat from Naples."—"What sort of a man is he?"—"His name is Bosco, and the people love him."

Such busy-making everywhere in the night for the sake of the expected one. One of the goatherds on Monte Pellegrino is making small bouquets of daisies which his goats are to carry in their collar. And he has one hundred goats, and all have collars. . . . But it must be done. His goats could not enter Palermo the next morning without being decorated in honor of the day.

The seamstresses have had to sit at their work until midnight in order to finish all the new gowns to be worn that morning. And when a little seamstress has finished working for others, she has to begin to think of herself. She puts a couple of plumes in her hat, and raises the knot of ribbon about a foot. To-day she must look pretty.

Long rows of houses begin to be illuminated. Here and there a rocket ascends. Bombs hiss and explode at every street corner.

The florists along the Via Vittorio Emanuele have their stores emptied again and again. There is a constant demand for more of the white orange-blossoms. All Palermo is filled with their delicious perfume.

The porter in Bosco's house has not a moment's rest. Magnificent cakes and pyramidal bouquets

are taken up the stairs incessantly. And there come salutary poems and congratulatory telegrams. It will never end.

The poor bronze emperor on Piazza Bologna, the poor homely Charles the Fifth, who is thin and wretched as San Giovanni in the desert, has in some incomprehensible way a bouquet in his hand.

When the students standing on Quattro Canti close by, hear of this, they march up to the emperor in orderly procession, illumine him with their torches and raise a cheer for the old despot. And one of them takes charge of the bouquet to deliver it to the great socialist.

Then the students march down to the harbor.

Long before they arrive there, their torches are burned out, but what do they care! They come with their arms about each other's necks, loudly singing, and ever and anon breaking off the song to cry: "Down with Crispi! Long live Bosco!" So the song begins anew, but is again interrupted, because they who cannot sing throw their arms about the singers and kiss them.

Fraternities and guilds throng from quarters of the town where the same trade has been conducted for more than a thousand years. There come the masons with band and banner, there come the mosaic-workers, there come the fishermen.

When they meet they salute each other with the banners. Sometimes they stop and make speeches. They speak for the five who have been set free; the five martyrs that the government has at last given back to Sicily. And the whole throng of people cries: "Long live Bosco! Long live Da Felice!

Long live Verro! Long live Barbato! Long live Alagona!"

But if some one who has had enough of the life on the streets comes down to the harbor of Palermo he stops and asks: "What place is this? Madonna Santissima, where have I come?"

Because he has expected that the harbor would still be dark and desolate.

But all boats and sloops in Palermo's harbor have been taken by various parties and societies. They drift about in the harbor, richly hung with Venetian lanterns, and at every moment great rocket-bouquets are sent up from them. Over the rough thwarts rich rugs and draperies have been spread, and on these sit the ladies, the beautiful Palermo ladies, dressed in light silk and rich velvet.

The small crafts glide about in the water, now in large clusters, now separating from each other. From the large ships the masts and yards rise full of streamers and lanterns, and the small harbor steamers dart along over the water, their funnels wound with flowers. And underneath everything lies the water glittering, mirroring, reflecting, so that the light from one lantern becomes a whole stream of light, and the drops which fall from the oars become dripping gold.

But round about the harbor stand one hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty thousand people, quite giddy with joy. They kiss each other, they raise cries of delight and they are glad, glad. They are beside themselves with joy. There are many who feel that they must weep.

Ah, fire, that is joy. It is well that one can kindle

fires. All of a sudden a big blaze glares on the top of Monte Pellegrino, directly above the harbor. Afterwards immense flames rise from the whole jagged mountain wall, which surrounds the city. It flames on Monte Falcone, on San Martino, on the mountain of The Thousand, where Garibaldi came marching.

But far out on the sea sails the great Naples steamer, and on it is Bosco, the socialist.

He cannot sleep. He has gone up out of his cabin and is strolling back and forth on the deck. His old mother, who has journeyed to Naples to meet him, comes up from her berth to keep him company. But he is unable to talk to her. His heart beats fast at the thought of soon being home. Ah, Palermo, Palermo!

He has sat in prison for more than two years! They have been years of longing and anguish. And has it been of any use? That is what he wants to know. Has any benefit been derived from his having been faithful to the cause and gone to prison? Has Palermo thought of him? Has his suffering gained for the cause a single adherent?

His aged mother sits crouching on the cabin steps and shivers in the night chill. He has asked her, but she knows nothing. She tells about the little Francisco and the little Lina, how they have grown. She knows nothing of what he is struggling for.

But now he comes forward to his mother, takes her by the wrist, leads her to the railing and asks her if she sees anything far over there in the south. She looks out over the sea with her dim eyes and sees only the night, only the black night on the sea.

She does not see that a cloud of fire hovers above the horizon.

So he begins to walk back and forth again, and she creeps back under shelter. There is no need of his speaking to her, it is joy enough to have him home again after two years' absence. He was sentenced to be away twenty-four. She had not expected to see him more. But now the king has pardoned him. For the king is a good man. Were he only permitted to be as good as he would like to be.

Bosco crosses the deck and asks one of the seamen if they do not see the gold-cloud yonder at the horizon.

"That is Palermo," answered the seamen. "At night there is always a light cloud like that hovering over it."

It cannot be anything that concerns him. He wishes to familiarize himself with the thought that nothing is done for him. He cannot expect that all shall have become socialists at once.

Yet after a while he thinks something unusual must be going on. All the seamen assemble in the foreship.

"Palermo is on fire," the seamen say.

Lo, it could very well be so.—It is because he has suffered so terribly, that he expects that something should be done for him.

But then the seamen spy the fires on the mountains.

It cannot be a conflagration. It must be a festival of some saint. They ask each other what the name of the day is.

He also tries to believe that it is something of

that sort. He asks his mother if it is a feast-day. They have so many of them.

They come nearer and nearer. The din of festivities in the great city reaches their ear.

"All Palermo sings and plays to-night," some one says.

"A telegram must have arrived about a victory in Africa," says another.

It does not occur to any one that it can be for his sake. He takes his place in the stern in order not to see anything. He does not wish to delude himself with hopes. Should all Palermo illumine for a poor socialist?

Then his mother comes and fetches him. "Don't stand there! Come and look at Palermo! It must be a king that is coming to-day. Come and look at Palermo!"

He reflects. No, he does not believe that any king is visiting Sicily just now. But how can he dare to believe, when no one else, not even his mother.——

All at once the people on the steamer give a loud cry. It sounds almost like a cry of distress. A large pleasure-yacht has borne straight down upon them and now glides along the steamer's side.

The whole yacht is flowers and light. Across the railing hang red and white silk draperies. All the people on board are dressed in red and white. Bosco stands on the steamer trying to detect what this beautiful messenger is bringing. The sail veers round and on its white surface there flashes before his eyes: "Long live Bosco!"

It is his name. Not a saint's, not a king's, not the victorious general's! The homage con-

cerns none other on the steamer. His name, his name!

The pleasure-yacht throws up a few rockets. A whole heaven of stars rains down. Then it is gone.

He enters the harbor. And there is exultation, adoration, enthusiasm and cheers. The people say: "We do not know how he will be able to live through it"

But as soon as the homage is there, he feels that he does not at all deserve it. He feels as if he would like to fall on his knees before these one hundred and fifty thousand people that render him homage and beg them to forgive, that he has done nothing for them, that he is incapable of doing anything for them.

. . . . . .

It so happened that Donna Micaela was in Palermo this night. She was there to set on foot one of those new undertakings which she considered she ought to start in order not to lose her senses. It was probably on account of the ditching or the marble-quarry that she was there.

She, like all others, is down at the harbor. One notices her, where she makes her way down to the shore: a tall, dark woman with a noble bearing, a pale face with strong features and suppliant, longing, passionate eyes.

While the reception progresses in the harbor a singular struggle within Donna Micaela's breast is going on. "Now if this were Gaetano," she thinks, "could I, could I . . ."

"If it were around him all these people rejoiced, could I . . .

There is such joy, a joy, the like of which she has never beheld. The people love each other and are like brothers. And this is not only because a socialist comes home, but because they all believe that the earth will soon be happy. "If he came now, while this joy surges around her," she thinks. "Could I, could I . . ."

She sees Bosco's carriage trying to force its way through the throng. It moves slowly, step by step. Now and then it stands still. It will take several hours before it comes up from the harbor.

"If that were he, and I saw all crowding about him, could I then refrain from throwing myself in his arms? Could I?"

. . . . . .

As soon as she is able to work her way out of the throng, she takes a carriage, rides out of Palermo through Conca d'Oro's plain to the old dome of the Norman kings in Monreale.

She enters there and stands face to face with the loveliest image of Christ that human skill has created. Highest up in the chancel sits the blessed Christ in radiant mosaic. He is mighty and mysterious and majestic. Countless are they that journey to Monreale to receive the comfort of eholding His face. Countless are they, who, in distant countries, long to go to Him.

The ground rocks under him who beholds the image for the first time. His eyes compel the stranger to bend the knee. Without knowing it, one's lips stammer: "Thou, God, art God."

Round about the temple-walls the events of the world glow in glorious mosaics. They only lead up

to him. They are only there to say: "All the past is his. The present belongs to him. And all the future likewise."

The secrets of life and death dwell within this head.

There lives the spirit that governs the world's destinies. There beams the love that shall lead the world to salvation.

And Donna Micaela entreats him: "Thou, God's Son, separate me not from Thee! Let no human being have power to separate me from Thee!"

III

THE COMING-HOME

IT is quite a wonderful thing to come home. While still on the journey it cannot be imagined that it will be so wonderful. On reaching Reggio, on the Messina Sound, Sicily is seen to rise out of the sea like a land of mist, and at first a feeling of impatience arises: "Is that all? Why, that is just like all other countries."

And this impatience continues on stepping ashore in Messina. Something ought to have happened, happened while away. There should not be the same distress, the same tatters, the same misery, as on going away.

It is seen well enough that the spring is come. The fig-trees bear leaves again, the vines send out tendrils that grow to be several feet in a few hours, and quantities of peas and beans are spread out on the fruit-stands in the harbor.

Glancing up towards the heights above the city, the gray cactus is seen climbing along the edges of the rocks, covered with bright red flowers. They have burst forth everywhere, like bright little flames.

Yet, however much the cactus may bloom, it stands there just as gray and dusty and cobwebby. And the thought comes that the cactus is like Sicily

No matter how many springs will make it blossom, it is nevertheless always the gray land of poverty.

It is difficult to understand that everything has remained quiet and the same. Why, Scylla and Charybdis should have commenced to roar as in former days. The stone giant in the Girgenti temple should have raised himself with joined limbs. Selinunto's temple ought to have risen from out of its ruins. All Sicily should have awaked.

Then, continuing from Messina down the coast, the feeling of impatience constantly continues. The peasants are still plowing with wooden plows, and their horses are just as thin and jaded.

Yes, everything is the same. The sunshine falls down over the earth as a shower of colors; the geraniums bloom at the roadside; the sea, a pale, light blue, lies caressing the shore.

Wild mountains and bold peaks rise along the coast. Far in the distance a glimpse of Etna is caught.

Suddenly, something marvelous seems to be taking place. There is no longer a feeling of impatience. Instead there is rejoicing at the verdant earth, the mountains and the sea. One is restored to the fair earth as one of her lost possessions. There is no time to think of anything but knolls and stones.

Finally you come in the vicinity of the real home, the home of your childhood. What wicked thoughts have you not had while you have been away? You wished never again to see this poor home, because you had suffered too much there. And now you behold the old mountain city in the distance, and it

stands innocent and smiling, and is unconscious of any blame. "Come and love me anew," it says. And you cannot but be glad and grateful, because it is willing to receive your love.

Ah, when you ascend the zig-zag road which leads to the city gate! The thin shadow from the olive falls upon you. Was it not intended as a caress? A little lizard rattles along over a wall. You must stop and look. May not that lizard be a friend from childhood who wishes to say how do you do?

All at once you become frightened. The heart begins to beat and bounce. You remember that you do not know what you will hear on coming home. You have written no letters and received none. Everything which reminded of home was cast away, rejected. That was thought to be the wisest, since you never more should be allowed to come home. And up to this moment everything connected with home has been dead and indifferent.

But at this moment you do not know how you can bear it, if everything here on one's native mountain is not wholly as it used to be. It will make your heart sore if Monte Chiaro has lost a palm, or if a single stone has got loose in the city wall.

Will the large agave still be standing on its ledge? No, the agave is no longer there, it has bloomed and been cut down. And the stone bench at the bend of the road is broken. That bench you will miss, it used to be such a splendid resting-place. And lo, they have built a barn on the green spot under the almond-trees. You will never more be able to stretch yourself there on the blossoming clover.

You dread every step. What will come next?

You are so agitated, that should you hear that a single one of the old beggar-women has died during your absence you would feel like weeping.

No, one did not know that it was so wonderful to come home.

You came out of the prison a few weeks ago, and the prison torpor has clung to you. You hardly knew if you cared to go home. The beloved one was dead; it was too dreadful to come home and tear up one's regret out of the grave. So you wandered listlessly about and let the days go by. At length you took courage. You must go home to your poor mother.

But no sooner there, before you feel that you have longed for every stone, for every blade of grass.

. . . . . .

Ever since he entered the shop Donna Elisa has been thinking: "Now I will speak to him of Micaela. Perhaps he does not even know yet that she is living. But then she puts it off minute after minute. It is not only because she wishes to have him a while alone by herself. It is also because as soon as she mentions Micaela's name, he will fall into woes of love and misery. For Micaela does not wish to marry him at all, that she has told Donna Elisa a thousand times. She wished to deliver him out of prison, but she does not wish to be the wife of an unbeliever.

Donna Elisa wants to have him all by herself only half an hour, only half an hour.

But for so long a time she will certainly not be allowed to sit with his hand in hers, asking him thou-

sands of questions, for the people have now learned that he has come. Instantly the whole street is full of all those who wish to see him. Donna Elisa has locked the door because she well knew that she should not be left alone with him a moment after they had discovered him, but it does not greatly help. They knock on the pane and pound on the door.

"Don Gaetano," they cry, "Don Gaetano!"

Gaetano comes laughing out on the steps. They swing their caps and cheer. He hastens down into the crowd, and embraces one after the other.

But that does not satisfy them. He must mount the steps and make a speech. He must tell them how terrible the government has been toward him, and how badly he has fared in the prison.

Gaetano laughs continually and places himself on the steps. "The prison," he says, "what is there to say about that! I have had my soup every dinner, and that is more than many of you can say."

The little Gandolfo swings his cap and cries to him, "There are many more socialists in Diamante now than when you went away, Don Gaetano."

"How could it be otherwise?" he says. "All people must become socialists. Is socialism something awful and terrible? Socialism is an idyl. It is an idyl about a home of one's own, and cheerful work, which every human being is at work upon ever since his childhood. A whole world filled with. . ."

He checks himself, for he has chanced to cast a glance over to the summer-palace. There stands Donna Micaela on one of the balconies, looking down upon him.

Not for a moment does he believe that it is an illusion or an apparition. He sees instantly that she is real and living. But just on that account . . . and then because the prison has taken his strength away from him, so that he cannot be considered a well person . . . .

He feels terribly embarrassed at not being able to hold himself upright. He clutches the air with his hands, endeavors to get support against the door-post, but it is of no avail. His limbs will not bear him, he slips down the steps, striking his head on a stone.

There he lies quiet, as though he were dead.

All rush forward, carry him in, run for the barber, surgeon and doctor, prescribe, talk and propose a thousand ways to help him.

Donna Elisa and Pacifica finally get him into one of the bed-chambers. Luca drives out the people and stands watch outside the closed door. Donna Micaela, who has come in with the rest, he has first of all taken by the hand and led out. She could not be allowed to remain inside. Luca had himself seen Gaetano fall, as though he had got a blow across the head, when he caught sight of her.

The doctor arrives, and he makes one attempt after the other to awaken Gaetano. It is useless. The doctor thinks that he has received a dangerous blow on the head, when he fell. He does not know if he will succeed in bringing him to.

The fainting by itself was nothing, but this blow against the hard edge of the stone step. . . .

Within is anxiety and bustle. The poor things, shut out, cannot do anything but listen and wait.

They stand there all day outside Donna Elisa's door. There stand Donna Concetta and Donna Emilia. There has not been much friendship between them in past times; to-day, however, they stand side by side and mourn.

Many anxious eyes are spying through the window into Donna Elisa's house. The little Gandolfo and old Assunta from the cathedral steps, and the poor chair-maker, stand there the whole afternoon. It is so terrible that Gaetano is going to die, just as they have got him back.

The blind stand there waiting as if they expected that he would give them their sight, and poor people, both from Geraci and Corvaja, stand there in order to learn how it will turn out with their young lord, the lost Alagona.

He meant well by them, and in him dwelt great power and ability. Had he only been allowed to live . . . .

"God has taken his hand from Sicily," they say. "All who wish to succor the people He lets perish."

The whole afternoon and evening, and far into the night, the crowd remains outside Donna Elisa's house. Precisely at twelve Donna Elisa throws open the shop door and comes out on the steps. "Is he better?" they all cry at one time.—"No, he is not better."

Then it becomes quiet, but finally a single, trembling voice asks: "Is it worse?"—"No, no, it is not worse. It is the same. The doctor is with him."

Donna Elisa has thrown a black shawl over her head and carries a lantern in her hand. She descends the steps and goes out into the street, where people

are sitting and lying closely packed together. She gropes her way along slowly.

"Is Gandolfo here?" she asks.

"Yes, Donna Elisa." And Gandolfo steps forward to her.

"You shall come with me and open your church for me."

All who hear Donna Elisa say this, understand that she wishes to go out to the Christ-child in San Pasquale's and pray for Gaetano. They rise and wish to accompany her.

Donna Elisa is touched by this sympathy. Her heart bursts wide open.

"I will tell you something," she says, and her voice trembles a good deal. "I have had a dream. I know not how it could happen that I fell asleep this night. But while I sat by the bedside feeling most anxious, I slept. And I had hardly dropped asleep, ere I saw the Christ-child before me, in crown and golden shoes, as it stands out there in San Pasquale's. And thus it said to me: 'Make the poor woman that lies praying in my church your daughter-in-law, then Gaetano will be well!' It had only time to say that before I awoke, and, as I opened my eyes, it was as if I saw the Christ-child disappearing through the wall. And now I must go and see if some one is there.

"But now you all hear that I promise that if there is any woman out in San Pasquale's I will do as the image has commanded me. Even though it be the poorest lass from the street, I will take care of her and make her my daughter-in-law."

When Donna Elisa had said that, she and all who

had been waiting on the street proceeded to San Pasquale's. All the poor people quiver with expectation. They can scarcely keep from rushing past Donna Elisa to see if some one is in the church.

Fancy if it is a gypsy lass who has sought shelter there during the night! Who else can be in the church at night but a poor, homeless thing? It is an awful promise Donna Elisa has made.

Finally they are at Porta Etnea, and then they proceed briskly down the hill. May the Lord preserve us, the church door stands open! Consequently some one is really inside.

The lantern trembles in Donna Elisa's hand. Gandolfo offers to take it, but she keeps it. "In the name of God, in the name of God," she murmurs, as she passes into the church.

The people press on behind her. They almost crowd each other to death at the door, but suspense keeps them silent. No one says a word. All look up to the high altar. Is any one there? Is any one there?

The little hanging lamp over the image gives but a miserable light. Is any one there?

Yes, there is some one. Over there is a woman. She is on her knees praying, and bends her head so low that they cannot see who it is. But now, hearing steps behind her, she lifts the long, gracefully curved neck and looks up. It is Donna Micaela.

At first she becomes frightened, and gives a start as though she would flee. Donna Elisa, too, is frightened, and they look at each other as if they had never met before. Then Donna Micaela says quite gently: "You come to pray for him, sister-in-law."

And they see her moving a little farther away in order that Donna Elisa may have the place directly opposite the image.

Donna Elisa's hand trembles so that she is obliged to put down the lantern on the floor, and her voice is quite hoarse, as she says: "Has no one but you been here to-night, Micaela?"—"No, no one else."

Donna Elisa is obliged to lean against the wall to keep from falling, and Donna Micaela notices it. Immediately she is at her side and lays her arm around her waist. "Sit down, sit down!" She conducts her to the altar platform, and sinks down on her knees before her. "Is it so bad with him? We will pray for him."

"Micaela," says Donna Elisa, "I thought I should receive succor out here."—"Yes, that you surely will."—"I dreamed that the image standing there came to me and said that I ought to come here."—"Ah, well, many and many a time it has helped us before."—"But it said like this to me: 'Make the poor woman, who lies out there praying at the altar, your daughter-in-law, then will your son be well!'"—"What say you, that he said?"—"I should make her, who lay praying out here, my daughter-in-law."—"And would you do that? Why, you did not know whom you would meet!"

"On the way I made the promise—and they that accompanied me, heard it—that whoever it might be, I should take her in my arms and conduct her to my home. I thought it was some poor thing that God wished to help."—"And so it was indeed."—"I felt so grieved when I saw that there was no one here but you."

Donna Micaela does not reply ; she looks up at the image. "Do you wish it? Do you wish it?" she whispers anxiously.

Donna Elisa continued lamenting. "I saw the image so plainly, and it has never failed me before. I thought that some poor dowerless thing had asked it for a husband. Such things have happened before. What shall I do now?"

She moans and complains. She cannot get rid of the thought that it would be a poor woman. Donna Micaela becomes impatient. She takes her by the arm and shakes her. "Why, Donna Elisa, Donna Elisa."

Donna Elisa does not hear her ; she continues her wailing. "What shall, what shall I do?"

"Why, make the poor woman that lay here praying your daughter-in-law then, Donna Elisa!"

Donna Elisa looks up. What a face she has before her! So charming, so winning, so smiling!

But she does not see it for more than a moment. Donna Micaela hides it immediately in Donna Elisa's old black dress.

Donna Micaela and Donna Elisa proceed together into the city. The street makes a bend, so that they cannot see Donna Elisa's house before they are quite near to it. When at length they are within sight of it, they see that the shop-windows are lit up. Four enormous wax candles are burning behind the garlands of rosaries.

The women press each other's hands. "He is alive," whispered one to the other. "He is alive."

"You must not tell him anything of what the

image commanded you to do," says Donna Micaela to Donna Elisa.

Outside the shop they embrace and each one goes her way.

After a little while Gaetano comes out on the door-step. He stands still a moment and inhales the fresh night air. Then he sees how lights are lit in the dark palace across the street.

Gaetano breathes hard and laboriously. He appears almost to be afraid to go farther. Suddenly he dashes off, as one who goes to meet an inevitable disaster. He finds the portal to the summer-palace unlocked, takes the stairs in two bounds and pulls open the door of the music-room without knocking.

Donna Micaela sits wondering whether he will come to-night or not until the morning. She hears his steps out in the gallery. Terror takes possession of her. What will he now be like? She has longed so incredibly for him. Will he really be such that all this longing will be assuaged?

And will no more walls rise between them? Will they now be able to tell each other everything? Will they speak of love and not socialism?

When he opens the door she tries to go towards him, but she cannot. Her whole body shakes. She sits down and hides her eyes with her hand.

She expects that he will throw his arms around her and kiss her, but he is not very likely to do that. Gaetano is not in the habit of doing what you expect he will do.

As soon as he was able to hold himself upright, he hurried on his clothes in order to come and see her. He is really in brilliant humor. He would

have liked her to have taken it less seriously. He does not wish to become excited. Had he not fainted in the morning? He was not very strong.

He stands still beside her till she regains her composure. "You have weak nerves," he says. That is really all he says.

She and Donna Elisa and everybody are convinced that he is come to press her to his bosom and say that he loves her. But just on that account it is impossible for Gaetano. Some people are wicked. It is their nature never to do the very thing they should do.

Gaetano begins to tell her about his journey. He does not even mention socialism. He talks of express-trains and conductors and strange fellow-travelers.

Donna Micaela sits looking at him. Her eyes beg and entreat more and more fervently. Gaetano appears to be overjoyed and glad to see her. But why does he not say what he is going to say?

"Have you traveled on the Etna railroad?"

"Yes," he replies, and commences to talk quite freely about the beauty and usefulness of that line. He knows nothing of how it has come to exist.

Gaetano sits there saying to himself that he is a barbarian. Why does he not speak the word she is longing for? But why does she sit there so humbly? Why does she show that he needs only stretch out his hand and take her? He is wildly and enthusiastically happy to be so near her, but he is so sure of her. It is such fun to torment her.

But the Diamante people are still standing down on

the street. And all feel as happy as though they were giving away a daughter in marriage.

They have all been patient till now, in order to give Gaetano time to declare himself. But now it surely must be done. And they commence to shout:

"Long live Gaetano! long live Micaela!"

Donna Micaela looks up with unutterable anguish. Surely he must understand that she cannot help that.

She goes out in the gallery and sends down Lucia to beg them to be quiet.

When she returns, Gaetano has risen. He offers her his hand. He wishes to go.

Donna Micaela holds out her hand to him hardly aware of what she is doing. But then she pulls it back. "No, no," she says.

He wishes to go, and who knows whether he will come back to-morrow. And she has not yet spoken with him; she has not said a word to him of all she wished to tell him.

Surely it need not be between them as between ordinary lovers. Had he not given color and meaning to her life during many years? If he now talked love or not to her, that mattered not. She must nevertheless tell him what he has been to her.

And now, now immediately. She must not waste time where Gaetano is concerned. She dares not let him go.

"You cannot go yet," she says. "I must tell you."

She drags forward a chair for him and seats herself somewhat behind him. His eyes are too merry to-night. They distract her.

So she begins to speak. She lays before him her life's great hidden treasures, all the words he had said to her and all the dreams he had made her dream. She had lost nothing. She had saved and hoarded it. It had been all the riches in her barren life.

At first she spoke fast, as though she were repeating a lesson. She is afraid of him, she does not know if he likes to have her talk. So she ventures to look at him. He is grave now, no longer wicked. He sits still and listens as if he would not like to lose a single syllable. A minute ago his face was sickly and ashy-pale, but all at once it changes. His face begins to shine, he appears like one transfigured.

She continues her narrative. She sees that he thinks she also is beautiful now. How could she be anything but beautiful, now that she may at last speak her mind to him. She may tell him how love came to her, and how it has never left her since. At last she may tell him how he has been her all!

Words are too inefficient. She takes his hand and kisses it.

He lets it happen without moving. The color in his face does not deepen, but becomes more transparent. She remembers Gandolfo, who had said that Gaetano's face became so white that it shone.

He does not interrupt her. She tells him about the railroad, tells of miracle after miracle. At times he looks at her. His eyes beam upon her. He is not making sport of her.

She wonders a good deal what is taking place within him. He looks as if what she said was nothing new to him. He seems to be familiar with it all.

Could it be that the love he bore her was exactly like the love she felt for him? Was it connected with all that was noblest within him? Had it been the elevating power in his life? Had it given wings to his artistic skill? Had it made him love the poor and oppressed? Does it now gain dominion over him once more, let him feel that he is an artist, an apostle, that nothing is too high for him?

But as he continues silent, she thinks that maybe he does not wish to bind himself to her. He loves her, but perhaps he wishes to remain a free man. He sees, perhaps, that she would not make a suitable wife for a socialist.

Her blood begins to seethe. She thinks that perhaps he imagines that she sits there begging for his love.

She has told him almost all that has happened while he has been away. Now she suddenly breaks short her narrative.

"I have loved you," she says, "I will always love you, and I think I should like you to say to me once again that you loved me. It would make the parting easier to bear."

"Would it?" he says.

"Can I be your wife?" she says, and her voice trembles with indignation. "Your doctrines I no longer stand in fear of. I am not afraid of your poor. I would like to turn the world upside down like you. But I am a believer. How can I live with you if you will not follow me in that? Or perhaps you would lure me into unbelief? The world would then be dead to me. Everything would lose mean-

ing, worth. I should become a miserable, impoverished being. We must part."

"Really!" he turns towards her. His eyes begin to glow with impatience.

"You may go now," she says calmly. "I have been allowed to say to you all I wished to say. I should have wished that you had had something to say to me. Yet I dare say it is better as it is. We will not make it harder to part than need be."

Gaetano's one hand grasps firmly both her hands, the other holds her head still. Then he kisses her.

Was she mad to think that he should let anything in the world part them now?

IV

ONLY OF THIS WORLD

As she grew up, everybody said of her: "She will become a saint, a saint."

Her name was Margherita Cornado. She lived in Girgenti, which lies on the south side of Sicily, in the great mining district. When she was still a child, her father was a miner; afterwards he came into a small inheritance, which enabled him to leave off working.

There was a little, narrow and wretched platform on the roof of Margherita Cornado's house in Girgenti reached by a steep and narrow staircase from which access was gained through a low doorway. But it was worth the trouble to ascend it. Arrived, there was seen not only a mass of roofs, but the air above the city was full of towers and façades of the Girgenti churches. And every tower and every façade was a vibratory lacework of statues, of loggias, of glittering baldachins.

And outside the city you beheld a wide plain, gently sloping toward the sea, and a semicircle of mountains keeping watch over it. The whole plain had a reddish tint, the sea was enamel blue, the mountain-sides were yellow. It was a perfect Orient in warmth and display of colors.

But much more was to be seen. Ancient temples

lay scattered over the valley. Remains of walls and strange old towers were there. It was a complete wonderland.

While Margherita Cornado grew up, she was in the habit of spending the greater part of her days on this platform. Yet she rarely looked out over the dazzling landscape. She was occupied with other things. Her father was in the habit of relating to her about the life in the sulphur mines in Grotte, where he was a laborer. Whilst Margherita Cornado sat on the airy terrace she constantly fancied herself wandering about down in the dark passages of the mine, and groping along in the dusky shaft.

She never could cease thinking of all the misery which prevailed in the mines; above all, she thought of the children that carried the ore up to the surface of the earth. "The little carts," they were called. That name fixed itself in her memory. Poor, poor little carts, poor little mining carts!

They came in the morning and followed each his miner down into the mine. As soon as the miner had cut sufficient ore he loaded the little cart, and so the latter commenced to ascend. Several of them met during the journey, thus forming a long train. And then they would sing,

"One journey is done with smart and pain
Nineteen are left for weary little swain."

When finally they were up in the daylight, they emptied their baskets and threw themselves on the ground to rest a moment. Most of them dragged themselves over to the sulphurous pools, found near the mouth of the mine, and drank of the fetid water.

But they were soon obliged to descend again. As they climbed down, they cried. "Lord, have mercy on us, have mercy on us!"

For every journey the little carts performed, their song became more and more woful. They sighed and wept, as they crawled along the path. The little carts bathed in sweat. The baskets of ore dug holes in their shoulders. In ascending and descending they sang:

"O, seven more journeys there are,
Better than life is death by far."

During her whole childhood Margherita Cornado had been troubled about these poor children. And it was because she was always thinking of their misery, it was believed she would become a saint.

Nor did she forget them when she became older. As soon as she was grown up, she set out for Grotte, where most of the mines were, and when the little carts came up in the daylight, she stood waiting for them at the mouth of the mine with fresh clean water. She wiped the sweat off their faces, and tended the sores on their shoulders. It was not much she could do for them, yet it soon seemed to the little carts that they should not be able to endure the work that day Margherita Cornado came not and succored them.

But unfortunately for the little carts, Margherita Cornado was very comely. One day it happened that one of the mining engineers saw her, as she was succoring them, and straightway he fell in love with her.

A couple of weeks after that Margherita Cornado ceased coming to the Grotte mines. Instead she stayed at home in Girgenti and sewed on her dowry. She

was going to marry the mining engineer. She was making a good match and would come into relationship with all the most potent people in the city. Then she could no longer take care of the little carts.

A few days before the wedding, the old beggar, Santuzza, who was Margherita's godmother, came desiring to speak with her. They repaired to the platform on the roof, in order to be left alone.

"Margherita," said the old woman, "you are now living in such joy and splendor, that it is not worth while perhaps to talk to you about those that are in want and trouble. You have forgotten all such things."

Margherita rebuked her for speaking so.

"I come with a message to you from my son Orestes. He has come to grief, and he needs your advice."

"You know that you may speak freely to me, Santuzza," said the girl.

"Orestes is no longer at the Grotte mines, you know. He is at Racalmuto. And he is badly off there. Not exactly because the wages are small, but the engineer is one of those who torture poor people to the last drop of blood."

The old woman told how the engineer tormented the workingmen. He reckoned too short working-time; he made them pay a fine if they were out a day. He did not manage the mines properly. Crush followed upon crush. No one was sure of his life as long as he was underground.

"Well, Margherita, Orestes had a son. A fine lad, just ten years old. The engineer came and wanted

to buy the boy of Orestes, and place him among the little carts. But Orestes said no. His boy should not be ruined by such work.

"The engineer threatened, and said that Orestes should be driven away from the mine.

Santuzza made a pause.

"And so?" asked Margherita.

"Well, then, Orestes let the engineer have the boy. The next day he whipped him. He whipped him every day. The boy became more and more wretched. Orestes saw it and begged the engineer to spare the boy, but he had no pity. He said that the boy was lazy, and continued to persecute him.—And now he is dead. My grandson is dead, Margherita."

The girl had at once forgotten all her happiness. She was again only the miner's daughter, the little cart's patroness, the poor child that used to sit there on the bright platform weeping over the misery in the black mines.

"Why is that man allowed to live?" she exclaimed.

The woman looked treacherously at her and stealthily drew forth a knife. Orestes sends you this with a thousand questions," she said.

Margherita Cornado took the knife, kissed the blade and gave it back without a word.

Came the night before the wedding. The bridegroom's parents were expecting the son. He was to come home from the mines toward the close of the day. But he did not come. Late in the night a servant was sent to the Grotte mines to seek him. He was found a mile from Girgenti. He lay murdered by the roadside.

Search began immediately for the murderer. Close inquiries were held with the miners at Grotte, but the offender could not be detected. There were no witnesses; no one could be induced to betray a comrade.

Then Margherita Cornado appeared, and denounced Orestes, the son of her godmother, Santuzza, who had not moved to Racalmuto.

She did this, although she knew that her fiancé was guilty of all that with which Santuzza had charged him. She did this, although she herself had condemned him by kissing the knife.

She had hardly accused Orestes before she regretted it. She was seized with poignant remorse.

In any other country, what she had done would not be counted a crime, but in Sicily it is considered so. A Sicilian would rather die than act the informer.

Margherita Cornado felt no peace, night or day. She had a constant smarting anguish in her heart, perpetual misery dwelt within her.

She was not severely judged, because it was known that she had loved the murdered, and thought Santuzza had treated her cruelly. No one spoke contemptuously of her and no one refused to salute her.

Still it did not help her that others were lenient towards her. Remorse lived in her breast and tortured her as an aching wound.

Orestes had been sentenced to the galleys for life. Santuzza had died a few weeks after her son's sentence had been pronounced. Margherita could not ask forgiveness either of one or the other.

She implored the saints, but they would not help her. It seemed as though nothing in the world had

power to take away from her the terribleness of remorse.

At that time the famous Franciscan monk, Father Gondo was visiting in the regions about Girgenti. He preached for the purpose of collecting participants for a pilgrimage to Diamante.

It did not trouble Father Gondo, that the pope had not recognized the image of Christ in San Pasquale's as miracle-working. He had met blind singers on his journeys, and heard them tell about the image. During glorious nights he had sat at the feet of Father Elias and Brother Tommaso, and from sunset to daybreak they had related to him about the image.

And now the powerful preacher began to refer all the inflicted to the great miracle-worker. He exhorted the people not to allow this blessed opportunity to pass by unimproved. The Christ-child, he said, had hitherto received but little worship in Sicily. Now the time had come when it wished to have a church and worship, and to carry this through, it caused miracle upon miracle to happen through the sacred image.

Father Gondo, who had passed through his novitiate in Aracoeli's monastery on Capitolium, told the people about the image of the Christ-child there, and of the thousand miracles he had performed. "And now this mild and gentle little child desires to be worshiped in Sicily," said Father Gondo. "Let us no longer hesitate, but hasten to it. In these days Heaven is bountiful. Let us be the first to acknowledge the image! Let us be as the shepherds and wise men of the East; let us go to the holy child,

while it yet lies on the straw bed in the poor grotto!"

Margherita Cornado was filled with new hope when she heard this. She was the first who obeyed Father Gondo's summons. Subsequently others also joined him. Forty pilgrims marched with him through the inland mountain desert towards Diamante.

They were all very poor and unhappy. But Father Gondo had them sing and pray during the whole journey. Soon their eyes began to beam, as though the star of Bethlehem had gone before them.

"Know ye," said Father Gondo, "why God's Son is greater than all saints? Because he gives the soul holiness, because he forgives sins, because he grants the spirit perfect rest in God, because his kingdom is not of this world."

When his little flock looked weary, he cheered them with stories of the miracles the image had performed. The blind singers' legends became refreshing fruits and exhilarating wine. The poor wanderers in the mountain-desert of Sicily walked with light steps as though they were on their way to Nazareth to see the carpenter's son.

"He will take away all our burdens," said Father Gondo. "When we return, our hearts will be relieved of all suffering."

And during the journey, through the arid sun-heated desert, where no tree gave coolness, and where the water was bitter from salt and sulphur, Margherita Cornado felt that her grief was soothed. "The little heavenly king will take away my suffering," she said.

One day in May the pilgrims finally reached the

foot of Diamante's mountain. There the desert ceased.

They saw on all sides olive groves and fresh verdure. The mountain sparkled, the city sparkled. They felt that they had come to a place overshadowed by God's grace.

Joyfully they climbed the zigzag road, and with clear ringing voices began to sing an ancient pilgrim song.

When they had proceeded some distance up the mountain, people from Diamante came running to meet them. On hearing the monotonous sound of the familiar pilgrim song, they had left their work and hastened out. And the people of Diamante embraced and kissed the pilgrims.

They had been expected long ago, and it was a matter of surprise that they had not arrived before.

Diamante's image of Christ was a mighty miracle-worker; it was so full of mercy and love that all people should come to him.

When Margherita Cornado heard this, she felt as though her heart was already healed of its suffering. All from Diamante comforted and encouraged her.

"He will surely help you, he helps all," they said. "No one has prayed to him in vain."

At the city gate the pilgrims parted. The citizens of Diamante took them to their homes that they might refresh themselves after the journey. In an hour all were to meet at Porta Etnea and repair to the image. But Margherita Cornado had not patience to wait one whole hour. She inquired the way to the church of San Pasquale, and went there alone, before all the others.

An hour later, when Father Gondo and the pilgrims came out to San Pasquale's they saw Margherita Cornado sitting on the platform below the high-altar. She sat still, as if she were not aware that any one was coming. But when Father Gondo was quite near to her, she rushed up, as though she had been lying in ambush, and threw herself upon him. She seized him by the throat and wanted to smother him.

She was large, finely built and strong. A violent struggle ensued and it was with great difficulty that Father Gondo and two of the pilgrims were able to subdue her. She was quite insane, and so wild, that they were obliged to bind her.

The pilgrims had come in solemn procession, they sang and held burning candles in their hands. It was a long train, for many people from Diamante had joined it. They who walked first stopped singing immediately, they who came after, not having noticed anything, continued to sing. So the news of what had happened went from rank to rank, and wherever it came the song ceased. It was hideous to hear how it died away and changed into a low wail.

All the weary pilgrims understood that they had gone in vain. All their toilsome wandering had been useless. The bright hopes they had nourished during their pilgrimage died within them! The holy image would have no solace to give them.

Even Father Gondo was terrified. It was a harder blow for him than for any one else, because each one of the others had only his own sorrow to think of, but he bore all these people's sorrow in his heart.

How should he be able to answer for all the hopes he had awakened in them?

Suddenly one of his gentle smiles lighted up his face. The image no doubt wished to test his and their faith. Were they only steadfast, they would be helped.

He commenced again to sing the pilgrim song in his clear voice and proceeded up to the altar.

But as he came nearer the image he stopped singing. He stood still and looked at the image with wide open eyes. Then he stretched out his hand, took the crown and raised it towards his eyes. "There it stands, there it stands," he murmured. And he let the crown drop out of his hands and roll down the stone floor.

From that moment Father Gondo knew that he had before him the ejected image from Aracoeli.

Yet he did not straightway announce this to the people, but said, with his usual gentleness: "My friends, I will tell you something wonderful."

He related for them about the English lady, who wanted to steal Aracoeli's image of Christ. And he told of how the image had been called Antichrist and been cast out into the world.

"I still recollect old Fra Simone," said Father Gondo. "He never showed me the image without saying: 'It was this little hand that rung. It was this little foot that kicked on the door!'

"But when I asked Fra Simone what had become of the other image he always said: 'What indeed should have become of it? The dogs of Rome have, no doubt, dragged him away and bitten him to pieces!'"

When Father Gondo had said this, he went, just as quietly and calmly as always, and picked up the

crown, which a while ago he had allowed to drop on the floor.

"Now read that!" he said. And he let the crown pass from man to man. The people stood with the wax-candles in their hands so that the light fell on the crown. They that could read, read; the others at least saw that there was an inscription.

And each one who had held the crown in his hand, extinguished his wax-candle immediately.

When the last light was put out, Father Gondo turned to his pilgrims, who had assembled around him. "I have brought you here," he said to them," in order that you might find him who gives the soul peace and entrance to the kingdom of God, but I have led you wrong, because this one has nothing like that to give. Its kingdom is only of this world.

"Our poor sister has become insane," continued Father Gondo, "because she came here hoping for heavenly benefactions. Her mind became shattered, when she entreated the image without being heard. It could not hear her, for its kingdom is only of this world."

He was silent a moment, and all looked up to him to learn what they ought to think of all this.

So he asked them gently as before: "Shall an image that bears such words in its crown be allowed to profane an altar any longer?"

"No, no!" cried the pilgrims.

The people of Diamante were silent.

Father Gondo took the image between his hands and bore it on outstretched arms through the church towards the door.

However mildly and humbly Father Gondo had spoken, his glance had all the while rested sternly and with binding power upon the multitude. There was not one person, whom he had not subjugated and compelled by the power of his will. All had felt paralyzed and incapable of a single free thought.

As Father Gondo approached the door, he stopped and looked around. A last restraining glance went out over the people.

"The crown too," said Father Gondo. And the crown was handed to him.

He placed it on the image and went under the stone baldachin, protecting San Pasquale's image. He whispered something to a couple of the pilgrims, and these hastened away. They soon returned with a few armfuls of wood. These they laid down before Father Gondo and set fire to them. All who had been inside the church came swarming out. They stopped in the yard outside the church, cowed and passive as before. They saw that the monk intended to burn their beloved, beneficent image, and they offered no resistance. They could not themselves conceive why they did not try to save the image.

When Father Gondo saw the fire kindling, and accordingly felt that the image was wholly in his power, he drew himself up, and his eyes flashed.

"My poor children," he said gently, turning to the people of Diamante. "It has been a terrible guest you have been harboring. But how is it possible that you have not discovered who it is until now?"

"What shall I think of you?" he continued more

sternly. "You yourselves say that the image has given you everything you have desired. Is there then no one in Diamante who, during these years, has prayed for the forgiveness of sins and peace of the soul.

"Can this be possible? The people of Diamante have had nothing to pray for save lottery numbers and prosperous years and daily bread and health and money. Nothing save the good things of this world has it desired. Not one has it behooved to pray for a heavenly grace. Can it really be so? No, it is impossible," said Father Gondo cheerfully, as though filled with sudden hope. "It is I who have made a mistake. The people of Diamante have understood that I would not lay the image on the fire without inquiring into this matter. They are only waiting for me to cease in order that they may step forward and bear witness.

"Many will say: 'That image has made me a believer,' and many will say: 'It has granted me forgiveness of sins,' and many will say: 'It has opened my eyes, so that I have been permitted to see the glory of heaven.' They will step forward and say all this, and I shall be put to scorn, and be obliged to carry the image back to the altar and acknowledge that I have been mistaken."

Father Gondo was silent and smiled encouragingly upon the people. A violent commotion passed through the throng of listeners. Several apparently intended to step forward and witness. They went a few steps, then stopped.

"I am waiting," said the Father, and his eyes besought and entreated the people to come.

But no one came. The whole throng quivered with anguish at not being able to testify in favor of the beloved image. Yet no one did it.

"My poor children," said Father Gondo, deeply grieved. "You have had Antichrist among you and he has gained the power over you. You have forgotten heaven, you have forgotten that you possess a soul. You are thinking of this world.

"Formerly it was said that the people of Diamante were the most pious in Sicily. But now it must be otherwise. The inhabitants of Diamante are world thralls. Perhaps they are faithless socialists even, loving this world only. They cannot be anything else, for have they not had Antichrist among them?"

On being thus accused, it seemed as though the people would at last offer resistance. An angry murmur passed through the ranks.

"The image is holy," cried one. "When he came San Pasquale's bells rang a whole day."

"Could it ring less to warn against such a calamity?" replied the monk.

He continued his charges with increasing violence. "You are idol-worshipers, not Christians. You serve this one because he helps you. But the holy spirit is not in you."

"It has been kind and merciful as Christ," answered the people.

"And just that has been the greatest evil," said the monk, and now, all at once, he became awful in his wrath. "It has assumed the form of Christ in order to lead you astray. And thus it has caught you in its net. By heaping gifts and blessings upon

you, it has enticed you into its snare and made world-thralls of you. Is it not so? Perhaps some one can step forth and say the contrary? Perhaps he has heard that some one not present here has asked the image for heavenly grace."

"It has conjured a jettatore," some one said.

"Is it not he, who is just as great an evil-doer as the jettatore, that gains ascendency over him?" questioned the Father grimly.

So no more attempts were made to defend the image. Everything said seemed only to make the matter worse.

Several looked around for Donna Micaela, who also was present. She stood in the midst of the crowd, heard and saw all, yet did nothing to save the image.

For when Father Gondo had said that the image was Antichrist, she had become frightened, and when he indicated that the Diamante people had only desired the good things of this world, her terror had increased. She had not dared to do anything.

But when he said that she and all of them were under Antichrist's dominion, there was something within her that rebelled against him. "No, no," she said, "it cannot be so." Were she to believe that an evil power had ruled her during so many years, it would deprive her of reason. And her reason began to defend itself.

Belief in the supernatural snapped within her like a string too tensely stretched. She could no longer follow him. With infinite speed her thoughts explored everything which she herself had experienced

of supernatural things, and they passed sentence upon it.

Was there a single miracle that had been positively proved? She said to herself that it was concurrences, concurrences.

It was like unraveling a tangle. From that which she herself had experienced, she passed over to the miracles of other days. It was concurrences. It was spiritual influence. It was perhaps fiction, most of it.

The raging monk continued to rebuke the people in terrible language. She tried to listen to him, that she might get away from her own thoughts. But it only seemed to her that all he said was madness and falsehood.

What, then, was taking place within her? Was she, too, becoming an unbeliever, a free-thinker?

She looked around for Gaetano. He was there, and he was standing on the church step, quite near the monk. His eyes rested upon her. And just as positively as though she had told him, just as positively he knew what was taking place within her. Yet he did not appear to be glad or triumphant. He looked as though he would have liked to check Father Gondo, that a little bit of faith might be spared her.

But Donna Micaela's thoughts felt no mercy. They marched on, plundering her soul. The whole radiant world of the supernatural became crushed, annihilated. She said to herself that of celestial things we knew nothing, could not know anything. Many messages had gone from earth to heaven. None had gone from heaven to earth.

"But I will still believe in God," she said, folding her hands as if to return, nevertheless, the last and best.

"Your eyes, ye people of Diamante, are wild and evil," said Father Gondo. "God is not with you. Antichrist has driven God away from you."

Donna Micaela's eyes sought Gaetano's. "Can you give such a poor, impoverished being anything to live for?" they seemed to ask. His glance met hers with proud assurance. He read in her beautiful, beseeching eyes how her quivering soul clung to him for support. Not for a moment did he doubt that he would be able to make her life rich and glorious.

She thought of the joy which now accompanied him whenever he showed himself. She thought of the joy which had surged around her that night in Palermo. She knew that it sprang up out of the new faith in a happy earth. Would this faith and this joy be able to seize her, too?

She wrung her hands in agony. Would this new faith become anything to her? Would she not always need to feel as poor as at that moment?

Father Gondo bent down towards the fire.

"I repeat it once again," he cried, "if only one steps forward and says that this image has saved his soul, then will I not burn it."

Donno Micaela felt at once that she did not wish the poor image to be annihilated. Recollections of the sweetest moments of her life were knit about it.

"Gandolfo, Gandolfo," she whispered. A moment ago she had seen him beside her.

"Yes, Donna Micaela."

"Let him not burn the image, Gandolfo!"

The monk had repeated his question once, twice, three times.—No one stepped forward to defend the image. But the little Gandolfo crept nearer and nearer.

Nearer and nearer the fire Father Gondo conveyed the image.

Positively Gaetano had bent forward. Positively a proud smile passed over his face. Donna Micaela understood that he felt that Diamante now fell to him. The monk's frantic proceeding made Gaetano master over the souls.

She looked around terrified. Her gaze flew from face to face. Was the same thing taking place within the souls of all these as in hers? She fancied she saw that it was.

"Thou, Antichrist," said Father Gondo threateningly, "seest thou that no one has thought of his soul so long as thou hast been here.—Thou must perish."

So Father Gondo laid the ejected image on the pyre.

But it had not lain there more than a moment before Gandolfo seized it. He seized it, lifted it high above his head and ran.

Father Gondo's pilgrims hurried after him, in a hot chase down the steeps of Monte Chiaro.

But the little Gandolfo saved the image.

Down the road came a large, ponderous carriage. Gandolfo, whose pursuers were close behind him, knew of nothing else to do than to throw the image into the carriage.

Then he quietly allowed himself to be taken.

And as the pursuers were about to hasten after the carriage, he stopped them. "Take care, the signora in the carriage is an English lady."

It was Signora Favara, who had at last tired of Diamante, and journeyed out into the world again. And she was allowed to pass unmolested.—No Sicilian dares to assault an Englishwoman.

V

A FRESCO BY SIGNORELLI

A WEEK later Father Gondo was in Rome. He obtained audience with the aged man at the Vatican, and related to him how, under the guise of Christ, he had found Antichrist, who had insnared the people of Diamante into worldliness, and how Father Gondo had wished to burn him. He also said that he had not been able to lead the people back to God. Instead, all Diamante had reverted to unbelief and socialism. No one there troubled himself about his soul, no one thought of heaven. Father Gondo asked what he should do with these wretched people.

The aged pope, who is the wisest of all now living, did not laugh at Father Gondo's narrative, but became deeply distressed.

"You have done wrong, you have done very wrong," he said.

He sat silent a while thinking, then he said: "You have not seen the dome in Orvieto?"

"No, holy father."—"Go and see it then," said the pope, "and when you return you shall tell me what you have seen there."

Father Gondo obeyed. He went to Orvieto and saw the sacred dome. And in two days he was again in the Vatican.

"What have you seen in Orvieto?" asked the pope,

Father Gondo related that he had found, in one of the chapels, frescos by Luca Signorelli, representing *The Last Judgment*. But he had neither looked at the final doom nor at the resurrection of the dead. He had directed all his attention to the great painting, which the warden called "*Miracles of Antichrist*."

"What did you see there?" asked the pope.

"I saw that Signorelli had painted Antichrist as a poor and humble man, such as the Son of God was when he wandered here on earth. I saw that he had clothed him like Christ and given him Christ's features.

"What did you see further?" said the pope.

The first thing I saw was that Antichrist preached in such a manner that the rich and mighty laid down their treasures at his feet.

"The second thing I saw was that they brought a sick man to Antichrist and he healed him.

"The third thing I saw, that a martyr confessed Antichrist and gave his life for him.

"The fourth thing I saw on the great fresco was the people hastening to a great temple of peace. I saw the spirit of wickedness precipitated from heaven, and all perpetrators of violence killed by lightning."

"What did you think on beholding this?" asked the pope.

"I thought: 'This Signorelli has been mad. Does he presume that when Antichrist comes wickedness will be vanquished and the earth become holy as paradise?"

"Saw you anything more?"

"I saw represented on the painting monks and priests dragged to the stake and burned. And the sixth and last thing I saw was Satan whispering in Antichrist's ear prompting him how to act and speak."

"What did you think when you saw that?"

"I said to myself: 'This Signorelli is not insane, but a prophet. Antichrist will surely come in the form of Christ, and make the world into a paradise. He will make it so beautiful that the people will forget heaven. And that will be the world's most dangerous temptation.'"

"Do you now understand," said the pope, "that what you related to me was nothing new? The Church has always known that Antichrist would come, equipped with the virtues of Christ."

"Knew you also that he had actually come, holy father?" asked Father Gondo.

"How could I sit here on Pietro's chair, year after year, without knowing that he is come?" said the pope. "I see arising among the people a movement, which burns with love for fellow-man and hates God. I see the people become martyrs for the new hope of a happy world. I see how they receive fresh courage and joy from the words, 'Think of the world,' just as they formerly received it from the words. 'Think of heaven.' I knew that he whom Signorelli had portended was come."

Father Gondo bowed in silence.

"Do you now understand wherein you have done wrong?"

"Holy father, enlighten me as to my sin."

The pope looked up. His clear eyes penetrated

the transitory veil covering created matter, and saw what was hidden behind it.

"Father Gondo," he said, "the little child with which you struggled in Diamante, the child which was merciful and miracle-working as Christ, the poor, despised child, which defeated you and which you call Antichrist, do you know who that is?"

"No, holy father."

"And he who on Signorelli's painting healed the sick, softened the hearts of the rich, slew those who committed violence, he who transformed the earth into a paradise and enticed the people to forget heaven. Do you not know who that is?"

"No, holy father.

"Who else can it be but Antichristianity, socialism?"

The monk looked up, terrified.

"Father Gondo," said the pope sternly, "when you held the image in your arms you wished to burn it. Why? Why were you not kind towards it and carry it back to the little Christ-child on Capitolium, whence he came?

"But that is the way you do, ye begging friars. You might take the great movement among the people on your arms, while it still lies as an infant in its swaddle, and you might bring it to the feet of Christ, and Antichrist would see that he is nothing else than an imitation of Christ, and acknowledge him as Lord and Master. But you do it not. You burn Antichristianity at the stake, where in its turn it will soon burn you."

Father Gondo fell on his knees. "I understand, holy father, I will go and seek the image."

The pope arose majestically. "You shall not seek the image; let it run its race through the ages. We fear it not. When he comes storming the Capitolium to ascend the world's throne, we shall meet it and we shall lead it to Christ. We shall reconcile heaven and earth. But you do wrong," he continued more gently, "to hate it. Have you then forgotten that the sibyl considers it one of the world-renewers. 'On Capitolium shall the renewer of the world be worshiped, Christ or Antichrist.'"

"Holy father, if the evils of this world be redressed through it, and heaven does not suffer by it, then I will not hate it."

The aged pope smiled his most subtle smile.

"Father Gondo, you must allow me to relate a Sicilian story. It is told, Father Gondo, that when Our Lord was creating the world, he wished to know if there still remained much to be done. And he sent out San Pietro to see if the world was ready.

"When San Pietro returned, he said: 'All weep and wail and complain.'

"'Then the world is not ready,' said Our Lord, and he continued working.

"After three days Our Lord sent San Pietro again to the world.

"'All laugh and play and rejoice,' said San Pietro when he came back.

"'Then the world is not ready,' said Our Lord, and he worked further.

"San Pietro was sent out for the third time.

"'Some laugh and some weep,' he said, when he returned.

"'Then the world is ready,' said Our Lord.

"And thus shall it be and continue," said the aged pope. "No one can deliver the people from their sorrows, but to him shall much be forgiven who nourishes in them fresh courage to bear them."

THE END.

JUL 3 1899

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